



PlayStation®2



PlayStation®Portable

PLAYSTATION®3

PlayStation®

Official Magazine - Australia

AUGUST ISSUE 2009
100% Australian Content

VERDICT!

FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 4

Why EA's new sports slugger
will smash your face in!



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CREED II • BAYONETTA • THE BEATLES: ROCK BAND
HOMEFRONT • SPLIT/SECOND • FINAL FANTASY
XIV ONLINE • JUST CAUSE 2 • AND MANY MORE!



NEW INFO!

GRAN SLAM

Gran Turismo 5 and
Gran Turismo for
PSP revealed!

ISSUE 33 AUGUST 2009
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10 REAL-LIFE TOUGH GUYS THAT WOULD EAT KRATOS FOR BREAKFAST



Wolfenstein™

5TH AUGUST 2009



PLAYSTATION 3



Games for Windows



XBOX 360

XBOX LIVE



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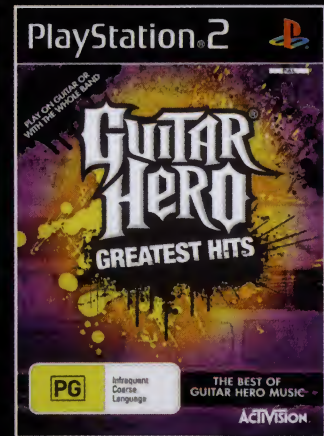
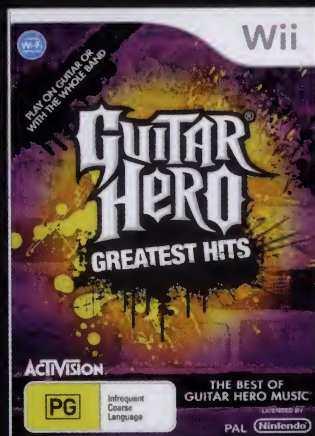
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PlayStation 2

PLAYSTATION 3



XBOX 360

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LIVE

Wii

PG

Infrequent
Coarse Language

NEVERSOFT



redoctane

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Violence



IN FRONT

August 2009 Issue 33

HARD BASTARDS

Feature - The toughest sons of bitches on the planet, and the closest gaming ever got!

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E3 2009

It's interesting that E3, the world's largest videogames expo, occurs in Los Angeles, the home of Hollywood. It's hard to say whether or not the film industry ever expected it'd be facing such stiff competition from games when the show was first welcomed into the movie Mecca, but the battle continues to heat up. In 2009, the 15th annual E3 summit, saw a righteous return to the flashier forerunners and boobs. In that order. Spitting in the face of the ignorant and kick the financial crisis in the balls, E3 2009 was the best sign yet that things have been better for gamers. Three hectic days and nearly 100 games later, the full report you can't afford to miss - but your experience of what E3 had to offer is just beginning.

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All the games fit to print, straight from Los Angeles!

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SUPERCAR CHALLENGE

Preview - Exotic racing from the makers of *Ferrari Challenge*. Want to feel like The Stig? Here's how!



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Official Magazine - Australia

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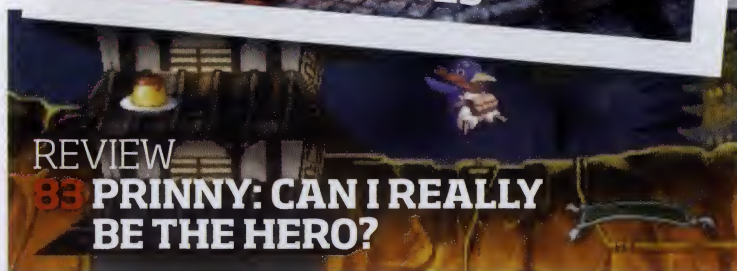
First impressions of the multiplayer beta!



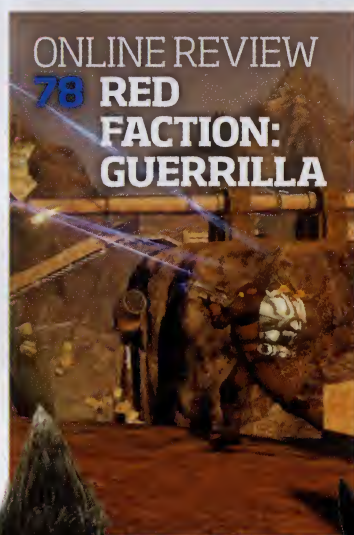
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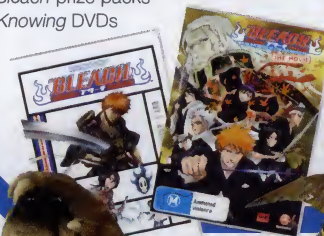
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One dude to rule them all...

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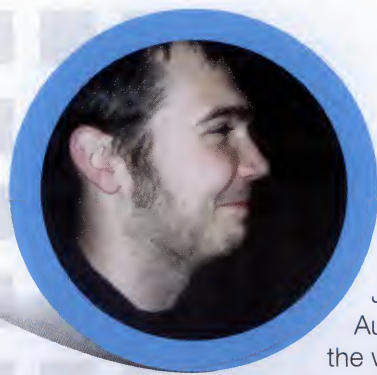
PLAYSTATION 3



XBOX 360



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The best thing about E3 is always the surprises. It's the quality games you never saw coming that leave the greatest impressions. I sprinted from the EA booth to the Eidos booth during the final hour of the show to blag my way into the last *Just Cause 2* presentation, because a number of other Aussie gaming scribes had been banging on about it into the wee hours of the morning for the past two nights. It was worth it, because the game looks as if it's being designed by people who've been mainlining sherbet into the section of their brain where fun comes from.

It was a similar story for *Homefront*, although after I'd seen the demo it was me banging on to anyone who'd listen that they ought to stop by and check it out. Same goes for *Mafia II*, and *Split/Second*, and *The Saboteur*. Even *Army of Two: The 40th Day* looks surprisingly great. Coming home with a bunch of brand new games to look forward to that weren't even previously on my agenda is second only to coming home with a photo of Danny Trejo and I *chilling like villains*. The dude was in *Con Air*. Awesome night.

It's always been the case really. It's certainly one of the reasons I've stopped assuming crap-looking games will be crap. You'll always have your sure things – *Modern Warfare 2*, *Uncharted 2*, *Assassin's Creed II*... they all seem to be living up to their already stellar reputations. But you never know when the next *FlatOut*, or *Urban Chaos: Riot Response*, is going to land unheralded on your desk.

LUKE REILLY
EDITOR

PSN: Capt_Flashheart **PLAYING:** RED FACTION: GUERRILLA **WANTING:** THE BEATLES: ROCK BAND

OPS ON: BEST IN SHOW



STEPHANIE GOH

The Saboteur I reckon. I really love the visual style and how the black, white and red fades into colour in each area the Nazis have been kicked out of.

PSN: TBA
Playing: Ghostbusters
Wanting: Red Dead Redemption



PAUL TAYLOR

I can't choose. I'm not even in the office right now – I had to take a week off to recover after being smashed with so many games. Okay, that's a lie. I booked it months ago.

PSN: paulgusta
Playing: Prototype
Wanting: Blur



JAMES COTTEE

Wolfenstein. If I ever tire of shooting Nazis, then you can assume a Doppelgänger has killed me and taken my place.

PSN: DrWho3987
Playing: Monster Hunter Freedom Unite
Wanting: Batman: AA



JAMES ELLIS

That's like asking to pick a favourite bikini booty at Bondi. But I'd say *Uncharted 2*. It's a prophet heralding the arrival of game/film hybrids.

PSN: gtfaster49
Playing: Red Faction: Guerrilla
Wanting: Brutal Legend

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Gaming's latest and greatest

SONY TO FIGHT THE IPHONE HEAD-ON

The PSP Go: Dark horse, or black sheep?

The full story behind this curiously-designed portable gaming unit has finally been revealed: Sony aims to take a huge bite out of Apple's market share.

The PSP Go is considerably lighter and smaller than the existing models of PSP, and ditches the UMD optical drive altogether. In its place is 16 gigabytes of internal flash memory for storing your games, music, filthy videos, and so forth. Games will be available for download from the PlayStation Store, as with the normal PSP. You'll be able to buy them online on your PS3 or PC, or leech them directly to the console itself. All existing downloadable PSP games will be compatible, and post-launch every single new UMD game will have a downloadable version as well.

The PSP Go has some new capabilities, too, beyond the obvious appeal of the sliding clamshell case for iPod-style video viewing. It's got Bluetooth, for one thing, suggesting that Sony will be pushing the PSP's potential as a mobile phone replacement a lot harder. Factor in the news that the price of development kits has been slashed by a whopping 80%, and it's clear that Sony is intent on annihilating the iPhone.

The unit is due to go on sale across all western territories by October 1. Strangely, the PSP Go will only go on sale in Japan a month later. It weighs a good 45% less than the PSP 3000, but it's not all good news. The screen is physically smaller – down to 9.7 cm from 11.

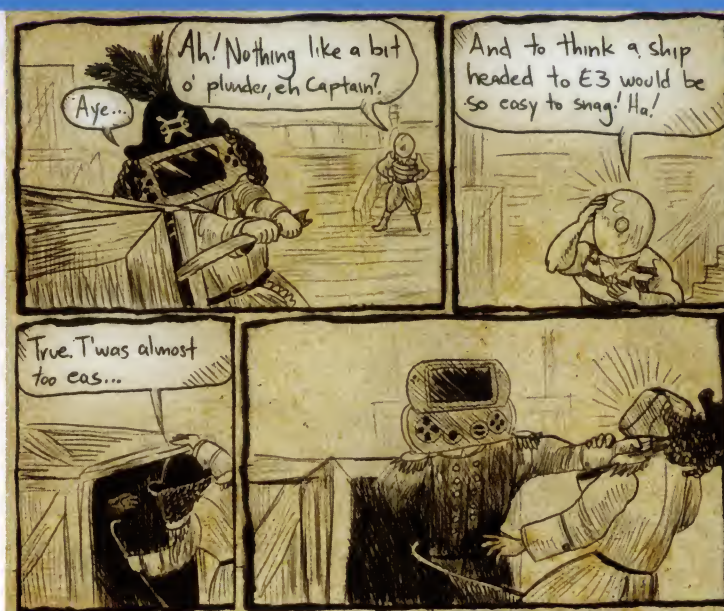
To allay consumer fears of a 'downgraded' system being forced upon them, Sony has stressed that the PSP Go will not be replacing the existing PSP format outright. Instead, the two systems will exist side by side – for now. Like we said, games will be available on both UMD and available to download.

With the amount of PSP games on the horizon, it seems it's back in a big way.



THE PIRATE KING

It's no secret that one of the PSP Go's chief missions is to battle piracy. The brilliant web comic *Castle Vidcons* recently made light of this, in a strip that showed the PSP-headed 'Pirate King' meeting his nemesis...





20 Angry Sackboy
He may be cute and adorable when he's happy, but when he's upset he's a little turd. Turn over and find out why, if you dare.



28 Inbox
Your words on our words, and our words on yours. It's like a carousel, you pay the money, you get and it goes up and down and around.

MAX PAYNE GOES SOUTH

Introducing a grubbier, dirtier breed of hero

He's back... and he's bald. The action hero who first introduced gamers to bullet time a decade ago has got a new look, and as a washed-up cop turned security guard he's plunging head-first into an underworld caper that's very, very dark – even by Rockstar standards.

Out of shape, addicted to painkillers, and still scowling like he's incredibly constipated, Max is now shooting up Sao Paulo. That's not a cracker biscuit – it's a Brazilian city, one of the largest in the world. If you thought the crime in New York was bad, you ain't seen nothing yet. We've got a Brazilian working here in the office, and we actually had to explain to her that kidnapping is considered a crime in most countries.

Former starring voice actor James McCaffrey is out, and so is Remedy — *Max Payne 3* is being developed at Rockstar Vancouver, the birthplace of *Bully*. The upshot is that the new

game will be built with the Rockstar Advanced Game Engine, the same tech that forged *GTA IV*.

That means the deep cover system, featuring adrenaline-fuelled health recovery, will be integrated into a huge open world.

We've also been promised a return of the key themes of manipulation and betrayal – it seems things just keep getting worse for Max.



WHAT'S HOT OR NOT

Too hot to handle? Or too cold to hold?



MIA@E3

Some of the hottest upcoming games were no-shows at E3.

The Electronic Entertainment Expo, the biggest gaming trade show in the world, has come and gone – and details of the most sought-after games remain elusive.

Sure, you feel betrayed. We all do. But the sad fact is that when a games company holds back like this, it means one of two things: they don't want to share any new information, or that new info simply doesn't exist.

Fitting into the former category was id Software, clearly saving all the news about *Rage* until Quake Con later in the year. Likewise, we've come to expect media black-outs from Rockstar – they'll tell us more about *Red Dead Redemption* when they're good and ready.

Ubisoft is usually quite

open with new information... except when it's not. Does its silence regarding the new *Ghost Recon*, *Rainbow Six*, and *Driver* games mean they could be less than blockbusters? Have they all been delayed? Or has the French gaming giant simply lost faith in the power of E3, saving the real goss for their Ubidays event?

Whatever the truth, we would not be at all surprised to hear of *Beyond Good & Evil 2* slipping to 2011.

While we're all confident the still-nebulous *Dead Rising 2* will be fine, there are some cases when no news is bad news. *Gran Turismo 5* will surface some day, come hell or high water, but it's entirely possible that the next *Syphon Filter* could meet the same fate as *Eight Days* and *The Getaway*: a one-way trip to the back paddock for a meeting with Uncle Ken's .303...

IN SHORT...



Sony has unveiled its new motion sensing controller for the PS3 that will directly rival Microsoft's Project Natal. It works by using a PlayStation Eye camera in conjunction with one or two newly-designed remotes.



Games Developers Association Australia President Tom Crago feels our country's development community is holding strong against the current economic storm.



440 *Brütal Legend* fans got together in Leicestershire, UK recently to all play air guitar at the same time. An "official adjudicator from the Guinness Book of World Records" oversaw the scene.

SCREENTEST

ARMY OF TWO

Welcome to the gun show

The Director

Michael Bay

The Plot

Elliot Salem and Tyson Rios are enrolled in the U.S. 7th Ranger Regiment during the 1993 conflict in Somalia. They complete an assassination for Philip Clyde, a private military contractor in the shady but well funded Security and Strategy Corporation (SSC). Afterwards, a fellow colleague, Lieutenant Colonel Richard Dalton, leaves the Rangers to join SSC and takes Salem and Rios with him for them to be mercenaries. Dollar signs replace their pupils.

The dynamic duo romp through the Middle East, Russia, China and finally on home soil whilst dealing with espionage, double crossing and also buying outrageous weaponry. They also wear ridiculous masks.

The Pitch

A buddy movie in the vein of *Bad Boys* and a huge riff on *Transformers* when the military are fighting in the desert. Just exchange robots for, say, terrorists.

Green Light or Development Hell?

This can only go one way, and that's down green light alley. Michael Bay's demonstrated how adept he is at action, and would be totally comfortable putting this together – especially if he believes it's a *Bad Boys* 3. Let's not kid ourselves: this is popcorn fare, a movie to watch that takes topical subjects, such as terrorism, American ra-ra patriotism and fantastical consumption, and ties it up with male bonding to produce a violent feel-good movie that will get our inner teenager frothing. Expect to see a lot of fist-bumping firefights with the camera swirling like a tornado in exchange for deep dialogue.

Best Line:

(after Rios rips a door off a car to use as a shield)

Salem: Oh that's clever. Who do you think you are, MacGuyver?

The Cast:

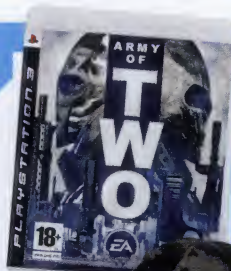
Josh Duhamel as smart-aleck Elliot Salem

Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson as dependable Tyson Rios

Lucy Liu as mission coordinator Alice Murray

Jason Statham as mad-as-a-cut-snake Philip Clyde

Paul Giamatti as Lt. Colonel Richard Dalton



STARRY EYED!

LUCAS: MORE WARS OUT OF ITS ARTS

LucasArts has announced another *Star Wars* game for the PSP, *Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron*, a follow-up title to 2007's *Renegade Squadron*. *ES* promises the ability to start a fight on the ground before taking control of a vehicle or spacecraft to finish the battle in space or on capital starships. Your actions on the ground, in the air and on starships affects how the other parts of the battle pan out.

The story revolves around a character called X2, a clone trooper carved from the DNA of a Jedi Master. Despite the custom story it will be possible to control the usual motley crew of *Star Wars* stars: Luke Skywalker, Darth Vader, Boba Fett, Darth Maul and a bunch of others from *Renegade Squadron* and *The Force Unleashed*. These characters will be employed in 16-player matches, much like *Renegade Squadron*, and will span across planets featured in the *Star Wars* canon – think Endor, Hoth and Yavin 4. Slated for a Spring release, expect more details soon.



NUMBER CRUNCHING

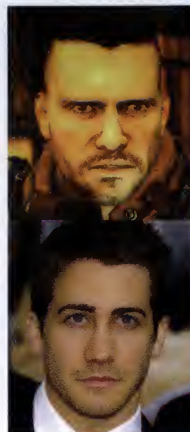
198

Total number of exhibitors at E3 this year

SEPARATED AT BIRTH

NO. 5 This should be Sev-erated at birth – Jake Gyllenhaal

Bold, dependable, rugged. And that's just their haircut. Jake "Prince of Persia" Gyllenhaal and Sgt. Tomas "Sev" Sevchenko both play at being heroes under their hooded eyes and matching stubble. Not pictured though, is Gyllenhaal's don't-make-me-knock-you-out scowl. Also not pictured, his cute-as-a-button sister Maggie.



WHERE TO NOW?

Nathan Spencer from *Bionic Commando* has had his time, and the proposed sequel (which we're proposing right now) needs a new protagonist. Another tough figure, ready to fight. Another poor soul with a body part missing. Move over, Spencer, it's time for....

VENUS DE MISSILE SILO

EXPLAIN YOURSELF

Statues are, by their nature, inert, however Ben Stiller's modern masterpiece, *Night At The Museum 2*, tells us anything's possible.

THE STORY

Aphrodite of Milos, aka Venus De Milo, one of the world's most famous statues, is due to be shelved thanks to the GFC. A freak accident renders her with ability to move and she must find a new home.

PROBABILITY

Doubtful. The statue-turned-hero genre is a far too niche market.

HOW WILL IT PLAY?

Interchangeable machinery on each of her two limbs, though since she's pretty skimpy – no pockets – you only have two slots to juggle tools and weapons. Toss in a few optional objectives, like collecting jewels and a fresh coat of paint and this adventure is cans-out action.

EXPLAIN YOURSELF

Paul McCartney's ex, Heather Mills, was approached by Capcom to promote *Bionic Commando*, as Mills is involved in charity work helping amputees. In exchange she, apparently, demanded a six-figure sum to go to charity and for a character in the game to be based on her. Capcom said no. This is her story.

THE STORY

Fighting for unbelievably stratospheric settlements for rock-star divorcees everywhere, Mills takes on the stingy and exploitative Wealthy Computer Games Company (WCGC) and trashy British tabloids to fund her adventures and philanthropic work.

MILLS AND BOOM

PROBABILITY

High. Mills would love the chance to be in her own game, and a Sir Paul-style character is a near bankable certainty.

HOW WILL IT PLAY?

Mills uses a weapon strapped on to her left leg, a Twitter-beam, to dispel unfavourable rumours and to bombard the public with persuasive messages. Her special attack is a polygraph with probes that attach to journalists' gonads, giving a shock for every lie they publish.

HOW WILL IT PLAY?

Half-climbing with shades of *Assassin's Creed* and *Tomb Raider*, half public-speaking with multi-tiered results, role-playing style. The climbing bit takes care of itself, but the material and reward for speeches comes from how successful your adventures on the mountains are.

NAVY GUY

EXPLAIN YOURSELF

Determination. Fighting your fears. Telling nature to back the hell off. All these taglines are attributed to Able Seaman Clearance Diver, Paul de Gelder.

HOW WILL IT PLAY?

Tense, that's how. Underwater missions, boss fights with sharks, dispersed with driving shit-hot sports cars and wrestling with your inner shark blood-lust.

EXPLAIN YOURSELF

In 2003, American mountain climber Aron Ralston became trapped by a boulder while climbing in the Blue John Canyon near Utah. Rather than die he amputated his arm with a cheap multi-tool. Without anaesthetic. We'd be appalled if this guy ever has to buy his own beer anywhere.

THE STORY

As Ralston, you take on the world's most deadly mountains, beginning with the Colorado 'Fourteens' before finally scaling Everest. In between, you tell your story to the world's media and various public-speaking circuits you frequent.

THE RALSTON EXPERIENCE

PROBABILITY

More than not. The climbing-the-mountain side of the game would offer a lot of freedom and you'd need to really explore the environment to make the speeches exciting and rewarding. It could surely be bunged together with a time limit and a few QTEs.

PROBABILITY

Likely: an Australian-flavoured adventure would be a coup.

TOP 10 UNLIKELY HEROES

Any clue how you'd react if dudes with evil intent encroached on your turf, knocked off your family, or sent you to another dimension? No? Us either. However, we can take comfort in how these blokes overcame adversity. Power's got naught to do with it. Responsibility does. Suck it up.



PRINCE OF ALL COSMOS, KATAMARI SERIES

Sure, all dads have done something embarrassing. But has your old man ever wiped out a solar system's worth of planets? Utter cringe-fest. Prince could've gone to his room, slammed the door and yell, "I HATE YOU" and "YOU'VE RUINED MY LIFE", but instead he saved the entire human race.

ISAAC CLARKE, DEAD SPACE

Clarke's in space, which is lonely enough, but he's in space, looking for his girlfriend, and then confronted by mutants with more limbs and elbows than the Von Trapp family combined. Does he run? The power of love – and sheer fear – compels him otherwise. That and the sinking feeling there's little means of escape.

RED, RED DEAD REVOLVER

Revenge and family honour are sound motivators for an orphaned boy to grow up into a bounty hunter, pick up a gun and track the bandits who were responsible for the death of his family. Either that or get dressed up as a bat. Before a time where the law offered justice, a six-shooter did the job just fine.

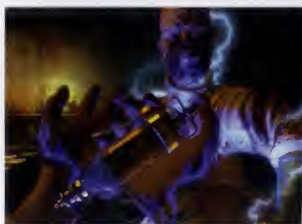


DAN CARSON, TURNING POINT: FALL OF LIBERTY

Carson, a construction worker in an alternate-1950s New York, witnesses a fleet of blimps cruising into the city. Nazi blimps. As the blimps attack, Carson legs it to ground level, and with sweet-FA military training picks up a gun and sticks it to 'em. Pity that the game was utter arse-paste.

HARRY MASON, SILENT HILL

Dad takes daughter to a sleepy town for R&R but instead crashes the car and gets separated. Snow falls out of season, thick fog surrounds the streets and malcontent dwarfs beat him to unconsciousness. Result? He gets a gun, fights winged beasts and lives through the nightmare.



JACK, BIOSHOCK

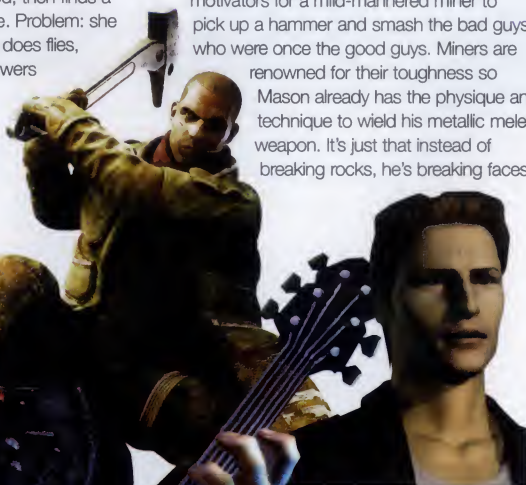
Plane crash? Devastating. Taking refuge in a ruined utopia under the freaking sea? Mind bending, but manageable. Injecting yourself with a brutal syringe filled with syrup from questionable origin that turns your arm into a lightning rod? Mere men would scream for the medicos. Not Jack. Jack fights back.

ICO, ICO

A boy with horns is locked up in a castle for, well, having horns. He's inadvertently released from his tomb, which is good, then finds a mysterious girl, which is nice. Problem: she attracts demons like faeces does flies, and he needs her shady powers to escape. Solution: he belts the demons while she opens the doors. In between he acts like a gentleman and holds her hand. Sweet.

ALEC MASON, RED FACTION: GUERRILLA

Revenge and family honour are sound motivators for a mild-mannered miner to pick up a hammer and smash the bad guys who were once the good guys. Miners are renowned for their toughness so Mason already has the physique and technique to wield his metallic melee weapon. It's just that instead of breaking rocks, he's breaking faces.

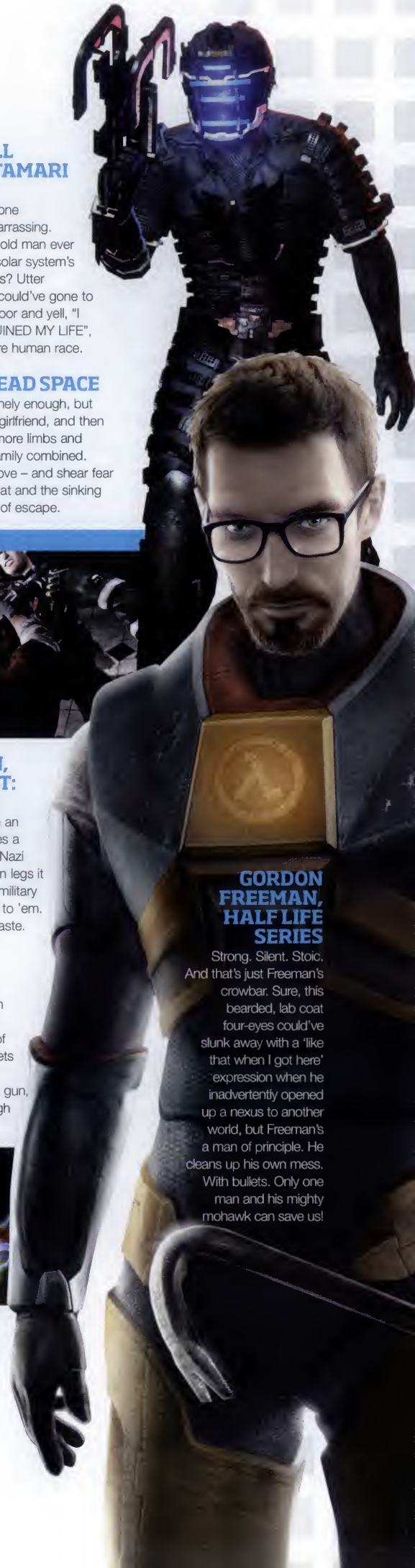


EDDIE RIGGS, BRÜTAL LEGEND

Heavy metal rockers? Sure, they're gods of sorts. Roadies? Not so much, especially in a fantasyland ruled by supernatural overlords bent on enslaving humanity. Odds for survival are bad. But, bestowed with a Flying V guitar that's laced with magic powers, and a battle-axe stuck in his hand and a 'why the hell not' attitude springs forth.

GORDON FREEMAN, HALF LIFE SERIES

Strong. Silent. Stoic. And that's just Freeman's crowbar. Sure, this bearded, lab coat four-eyes could've slunk away with a 'like that when I got here' expression when he inadvertently opened up a nexus to another world, but Freeman's a man of principle. He cleans up his own mess. With bullets. Only one man and his mighty mohawk can save us!



FAVOURITES

JOSH THOMAS

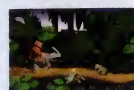
He's the Gen Y General on Network Ten's smash hit show *Talkin' 'bout Your Generation*, when he isn't getting on stage or TV and performing stand-up. A comedic wizard, 22-year-old Josh has a string of awards after performing at the Melbourne International Comedy Festival and touring to Edinburgh and Montreal, and despite admitting he's "not good at computer games" he does have a special top 10.

TALKIN' 'BOUT TAYG

Talkin' 'bout Your Generation screens on Network Ten Tuesday nights at 7.30pm, starring Josh, Charlie Pickering, Amanda Keller and the undoubtedly hilarious Shaun Micallef.

JOSH THOMAS'S
TOP 10 VIDEOGAMES**Wonderboy, Sega Master System**

It was my first ever experience with a video game. No one ever let me have a turn because I was too young.

**Donkey Kong Country, SNES**

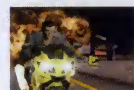
Donkey Kong was my all time favorite video game franchise when I was young. Monkeys are cool, yeah? I remember they had one level where the controls were reversed. It made me really angry. It was too hard. That isn't fun, okay?

**Super Mario Kart, SNES, Wii**

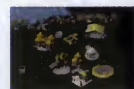
I loved this when I was a kid. I had a Wii (it got stolen) and I played this game on my Wii more than anything else. My favourite bit is the award ceremony. Beautiful.

**Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess, Wii**

This was the first ever Zelda game I played. I am not sure what I was doing with my time before.

**James Bond: Everything or Nothing, PS2**

James Bond is my favourite. Mostly because I like to pretend I am James Bond. I just bought an N64 and *Goldeneye* off eBay because I have never played it and apparently if you have never played *Goldeneye* you are a bad person.

**Command and Conquer: Red Alert, PC**

There was a weird dark age in my childhood where I didn't own a video game console, around the 64-bit era. I think my parents didn't understand why SNES was rubbish now and refused to buy a new one. I got through it with this game on PC.

**Pain, PS3**

I feel weird putting this on the list. But I have spent so much time playing this stupid game I can't leave it off. It is a fun party game.

**Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare, PS3**

Man, what an awesome game. That scene after the bomb goes off and you just limp around and die?! Brilliant.

**Linerider, iPhone, online**

I first played this online and was pretty excited to see it as an iPhone app. Basically you draw lines and then a little man rides them on a little sled. It is ridiculous good fun, and you can watch other amazing tracks on YouTube.

**Guitar Hero World Tour, PS3**

I played this so much my hands started to cramp up. I got really worried I would get RSI from playing a video game. So I bought the whole band set-up, then I can play the drums and give different hand-muscles a workout. Clever.



AROUND THE WORLD IN PS3

OPS trawls high and low for what's going on around the globe in gaming



TOKYO, JAPAN MONKEY BUSINESS

This could be the beginnings of the next *Ape Escape*. Japanese researchers have genetically engineered monkeys whose skin, blood and hair roots glow green under a certain light. And their unaltered offspring bear the same traits. The researchers hope that this leads to primates with genetic changes being studied to cure human diseases. "Transgenic primates have been created before, but this is the first time that the introduced gene has been passed on to the next generation," said Dr Kathie Raphael, a lecturer in Genetics at the University of Sydney.



LONDON, ENGLAND FINGERED

Solid Snake and Sam Fisher may have a new (albeit laborious and painful) method of covering their tracks. A cancer patient lost his fingerprints after taking a drug called capecitabine and was detained when he tried to visit the United States. The drug is a follow-up for chemotherapy for cancer of the head and neck, and its side effects mean that skin can peel, bleed and develop ulcers, and over time causing fingerprints to be erased, reported Singaporean specialist Eng-Huat Tan and colleagues.



SEATTLE, USA COSTUME DRAMA

A man called 'Jay' who dressed up as *Resident Evil*'s special commando HUNK during a zombie crawl was arrested, as a passer-by thought he was a masked gunman. Wearing all black and replete with imitation weapons, Jay walked into the Metro Clothing store, the sponsors of the zombie crawl. Shortly after, a dozen police cars arrived at the store and police entered with their guns drawn. "They (police) weren't aware of the event going on," Jay said. "They just had to check me out (and they) let me go pretty quick once they saw what I was here for."



MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA GAMER ADDICTION

Feeling edgy? Ants in your pants? Discombobulated? Sounds like you have gamer addiction (we think). You're not alone though as a study by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists Congress found that one in 12 gamers, (roughly eight per cent) show symptoms of being addicted to games. Vladan Starcevic, an associate producer on the study, said, "Their whole lives revolve around this activity... [These people] have other mental health issues, and it seems excessive video game playing is a manifestation of these underlying problems."



NEW YORK, USA AUTO-BIOSHOCK

So you've played a game but want to read all about it? In Spring this year, book publisher Tor, famed for their line of *Halo* literature, will release a *BioShock* novel. Available in both hardcover and paperback its 400 pages promise to "take you deeper into the realms" of the *BioShock* story. The company has also released a *Dragon Age* novel from David Gaider, BioWare's lead writer.

INTERNATIONAL CHARTS



UK

Source: ELSPA

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------------|-------------|
| 1 | inFamous | Sony |
| 2 | UFC 2009 Undisputed | THQ |
| 3 | Red Faction: Guerrilla | THQ |
| 4 | Virtua Tennis 2009 | Sega |
| 5 | Terminator Salvation | WB |
| 6 | Guitar Hero Metallica | Activision |
| 7 | Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare | Activision |
| 8 | FIFA 09 | EA |
| 9 | Sacred 2: Fallen Angel | Deep Silver |
| 10 | FUEL | Codemasters |



JAPAN

Source: VGChartz

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|----------|
| 1 | Shin Sangoku Musou 5 Empires | Koei |
| 2 | Tom Clancy's HAWX | Ubisoft |
| 3 | The Last Guy | Sony |
| 4 | Winning Post World | Koei |
| 5 | Gran Turismo 5 Prologue | Sony |
| 6 | Killzone 2 | Sony |
| 7 | Senjo no Valkyria Gallian Chronicles | Sega |
| 8 | Winning Eleven 2009 | Konami |
| 9 | Demon's Souls | Sony |
| 10 | Fallout 3 | Bethesda |



USA

Source: NPD

- | | | |
|----|----------------------------|------------|
| 1 | UFC 2009 Undisputed | THQ |
| 2 | inFamous | Sony |
| 3 | X-Men Origins: Wolverine | Activision |
| 4 | MLB 09: The Show | Sony |
| 5 | Sacred 2: Fallen Angel | CDV |
| 6 | Killzone 2 | Sony |
| 7 | Resident Evil 5 | Capcom |
| 8 | Call of Duty: World at War | Activision |
| 9 | Bionic Commando | Capcom |
| 10 | Terminator Salvation | WB |






RELEASE SCHEDULE

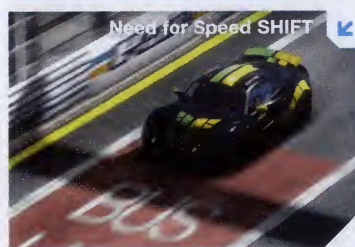
Coming soon to a store near you...

JUNE 2009

-  **Damnation**
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
-  **inFamous**
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
-  **Red Faction: Guerrilla**
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
-  **Guitar Hero Smash Hits**
GENRE: MUSIC | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
-  **Ghostbusters**
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
-  **Prototype**
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
-  **FUEL**
GENRE: RACING | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
-  **Monster Hunter: Freedom Unite**
GENRE: RPG | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
-  **SuperCar Challenge**
GENRE: RACING | DISTRIBUTOR: TBC
-  **Dynasty Warriors 6 Empires**
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ












JULY 2009

-  **Sacred 2: Fallen Angel**
GENRE: RPG | DISTRIBUTOR: FUNTASTIC
-  **Ashes Cricket 2009**
GENRE: SPORTS | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
-  **Call of Juarez: Bound in Blood**
GENRE: SHOOTER | DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
-  **Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10**
GENRE: SPORT | DISTRIBUTOR: EA
-  **Overlord II**
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI



PS3
Fight Night Round 4
GENRE: SPORTS | DISTRIBUTOR: EA

LATE/TBC 2009

-  **Need for Speed SHIFT**
GENRE: RACING | DISTRIBUTOR: EA
-  **Borderlands**
GENRE: SHOOTER | DISTRIBUTOR: 2K
-  **Dark Void**
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
-  **DJ Hero**
GENRE: MUSIC | DISTRIBUTOR: EA
-  **Blur**
GENRE: RACING | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
-  **Guitar Hero 5**
GENRE: MUSIC | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
-  **Batman: Arkham Asylum**
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
-  **Dragon Age: Origins**
GENRE: RPG | DISTRIBUTOR: EA
-  **Wolfenstein**
GENRE: SHOOTER | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
-  **Battlefield: Bad Company 2**
GENRE: SHOOTER | DISTRIBUTOR: EA
-  **Bayonetta**
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA
-  **BioShock 2**
GENRE: SHOOTER | DISTRIBUTOR: 2K
-  **Colin McRae DiRT 2**
GENRE: RACING | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
-  **Darksiders**
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
-  **I Am Alive**
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
-  **Final Fantasy XIII**
GENRE: RPG | DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
-  **God of War III**
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
-  **Gran Turismo 5**
GENRE: RACING | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
-  **Heavy Rain**
GENRE: ADVENTURE | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
-  **IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey**
GENRE: FLIGHT | DISTRIBUTOR: TBC
-  **Just Cause 2**
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
-  **Mafia II**
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: 2K
-  **MAG**
GENRE: SHOOTER | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
-  **Red Dead Redemption**
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: ROCKSTAR
-  **Modern Warfare 2**
GENRE: SHOOTER | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
-  **Singularity**
GENRE: SHOOTER | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
-  **Tekken 6**
GENRE: FIGHTING | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
-  **Uncharted 2: Among Thieves**
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY

QUOTE UNQUOTE

Industry chatter, inside tips and loose lips



"Closer to real-life than anything you've ever seen." Sony Computer Entertainment America's CEO Jack Tretton talking about the PS3's new motion sensing controller. Like, closer than life itself?



"Look forward to playing it on a PS3" Sony Computer Entertainment America's head of marketing, Peter Dille, when asked if *Metal Gear Solid: Rising* would purely be an Xbox game. Guess not.



"Hey, if Activision liked it, then they should have put a ring on it." Tim Schafer responds to the impending legal action from Activision, who are suing Double Fine Productions over their EA deal.



"The bloom is really off the rose for licensed games." EA Games boss, Frank Gibeau, on the likelihood of another *Godfather* game. Apparently the answer above actually translates to 'no'. It's poetic though.

AUSTRALIAN CHARTS

Source: GfK



1 inFamous



2 UFC 2009 Undisputed



3 Red Faction: Guerrilla



4 Guitar Hero Metallica (disc)



5 Guitar Hero Metallica (pack)



6 Terminator Salvation



7 Resistance 2



8 Virtua Tennis 2009



9 LittleBigPlanet



10 Guitar Hero World Tour



OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION
ANGRY SACKBOY

THE FACE OF EVIL

I hate lies. I despise liars. And the biggest lie of our age is that we are all the same.

Turned into doctrine, and deeds, this lie results in excellence being punished and evil being rewarded.

Let me be clear on this: all things being equal, we should be treated the same. All should be dealt with the fairly in the eyes of the law. But all things are not equal, because wicked men commit foul deeds. Too many criminals are captured, and tried, and convicted, only to be let off with a slap on the wrist.

Too often we read of judges whose minds are fogged by specious reasoning. "Well, this fellow did break into a family home at night, and he did do unspeakable deeds to a four-year-old girl. But he had been drinking, and he did have a rough childhood... Why, gosh, who could blame him? That's the sort of honest mistake anyone could make!" The result: a suspended sentence for the offender, nightmares for the victims, and a criminal justice system with precisely zero value as a deterrent.

Anyone with a skerrick of common sense can see the flaw in this judge's reasoning. Most people, when wasted, do not commit unspeakable crimes. Deeds speak of character, and of choice.

A child can see this.

But there are none so blind as those who will not see. Many – too many – desperately want to believe that free will does not exist, that all bad behaviour stems from a bad environment, and that humanity can and should be homogenised. Those convinced of this are liars, too. For they lie to themselves.


Flip the coin, and you see heroism ignored. Turn to page 58, and you'll read accounts of ten men who led truly exceptional lives. Their stories have been largely ignored by Hollywood. Why? Because there are many who feel uncomfortable when they compare themselves to greatness. They shy away from the light.

Great men and women can rise from the humblest beginnings, conquering poverty, disability, and even repeated failure. We forge our own destinies. It's easy to believe that you fail at life because 'the man' keeps you down. It's a lot harder to take responsibility.

Where am I taking this? I believe that games with branching story-lines based on good and evil choices are not a trend, but a fad. For one thing, they're a waste of developer resources – studies have shown that only around 10% of the population gets off on playing evil.

These games are hardly realistic, either. Mankind's capacity for awesomeness and evil are about the same: infinite. Recall the atrocities of our times: Auschwitz, 9/11, Beslan, Mumbai, the London tube bombings, Bali, the Tokyo gas attacks... and countless others.

No Classification Board would ever approve such content, and no developer would dare include it. In *Fallout 3* you can nuke a town, but you can't kill children. It's just not done.

That's why when I first booted up *inFamous*, I couldn't help but laugh. The narrator told of a city being destroyed by rioting, theft, and rape. Hah! Sucker Punch may be full of surprises, but they'd never stoop that low. 'Tap  to rape', or 'Shake the SIXAXIS controller to rape'.

But then, I'm only half way through the game. Maybe I shouldn't speak too soon...

Angry Sackboy just doesn't get it.

“There are many who feel uncomfortable when they compare themselves to greatness. They shy away from the light”



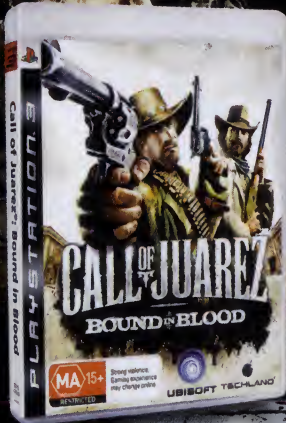
DON'T MESS WITH THE MCCALLS

THE OLD WEST, 1864.

TWO WANTED BROTHERS PREPARE FOR WAR
OVER THE LEGENDARY GOLD OF JUAREZ.

THEY SAY BLOOD IS THICKER THAN WATER BUT THIS IS NO
ORDINARY GOLD AND THESE ARE NO ORDINARY BROTHERS.

CALL OF JUAREZ BOUND IN BLOOD



THE WEST AT ITS WILDEST

Blaze a deadly trail across a lawless land through
eerie ghost towns and scorched deserts.



GET YOUR GUNS

From pistols to Gatlings, use the gun-slinging
skills of Ray and Thomas to prevail in
showdowns.



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of the West in multiplayer mode!



PLAYSTATION 3

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TECHLAND



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Strong violence,
Gaming experience
may change online



OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION
JAMES ELLIS

BRINGING HOME THE BACON

The average gamer no longer nurses a cheat guide while gulping their way through the latest bit of pixelated schlock. No, wrinkled bastards that they are, they're more likely to be nursing an infant, a wailing, incoherent vessel, capable of drooling indefinitely, while staving off fleets of androgynous alien hackers.

While many 'dudes' have boldly decided to bunker down and hold off maturity with an eternal river of porn and parental accommodation, eventually the fort must fold. Genetics will take hold. The miracle of life will come a knockin', and most gamers – both male and female – will pump out a pant wetter.

It's a situation that begs for answers to a new barrage of questions. When life rears its jaws, accompanied with real responsibility, will sweaty late-night gamers be ready? It's one thing for a student to be able to poke around in *Fallout 3* for 50 'spare' hours, but that's a luxury no parent outside of celebrityville can afford. Those 50 hours could be spent working to pay for a kid's run through dentistry, or helping them master the sport of croquet.

Perhaps the days of epoch-spanning life-busters with countless amounts of side quests are on a plank to oblivion? Perhaps a run through *Grand Theft Auto V*, for

most, will be straight down the line, go past GO, collect your \$200, don't buy the damn casino, and snipe the final bad guy from a mile away. Done.

It's hardly wild prophecy. Many bloke reviewers – now with child – are already commenting they no longer have time to persevere with lofty RPGs or endless adventure escapades.

A strong possibility is we'll likely see a spike in games that demand less time while offering up a sugar cube punch of fizz. Along with *Street Fighter IV*, *UFC Undisputed 2009* and *Fight Night Round 4* are set to revive the genre of the fist. Like arcade racers, these beasts thrive on short bursts of anaerobic frenzy – playable while waiting for baby Joe to get off the potty.

Then there's always the cheap, but increasingly, buzzin' finger tunes on the PlayStation Network, of which *Flower* is the perfect son. Yes, it's about a pansy floating on the wind, but it's also the first videogame in recent memory that could unwind the pent up flailings of a cane-thrashing nun. It caters for the lifestyles and times. It's quick to play. And it's cheap. No doubt many gaming parents will be powering it up after wrestling with their teething bundle of joy and tossing *Grand Theft Auto V* on eBay. School shoes don't come cheap, you know.

James Ellis is an anthropologist in training and isn't entirely asexual.

“The miracle of life will come a knockin', and most gamers – both male and female – will pump out a pant wetter”



DYNASTY WARRIORS 6 Empires

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OUT NOW



PLAYSTATION 3



XBOX 360^{LIVE}

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COMPETITIONS

WIN! WIN! WIN!



THE MORE YOU KNOW

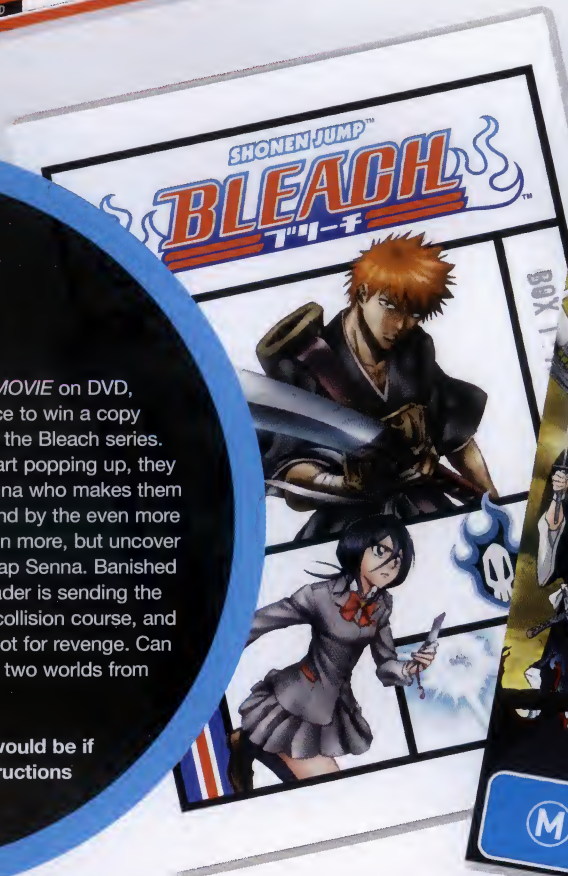
Thanks to Icon we've got 12 great DVD packs to give away, including the new Nicolas Cage and Alex Proyas blockbuster *Knowing*, plus *30 Days of Night* and *Apocalypto*.

To enter, tell us something that you know that you're fairly certain few other people do. Entry instructions below.

DO NOT BLEACH

To celebrate the release of *BLEACH THE MOVIE* on DVD, Madman and OPS are offering you a chance to win a copy of the movie and the complete first season of the Bleach series. After unidentified beings known as "Blanks" start popping up, they are soon followed by a Soul Reaper named Senna who makes them disappear. Puzzled by these unknown beings and by the even more mysterious girl, Ichigo and Rukia set out to learn more, but uncover an evil plot when a menacing clan tries to kidnap Senna. Banished from the Soul Society long ago, the clan's leader is sending the World of the Living and the Soul Society on a collision course, and Senna seems to be the key to his diabolical plot for revenge. Can Ichigo and his fellow Soul Reapers save the two worlds from annihilation?

To enter, tell us what your Bankai would be if you were a Shinigami. Entry instructions below.

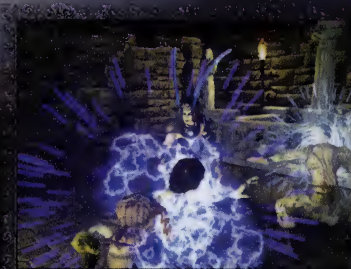


HOW TO ENTER

To enter *Official PlayStation Magazine* competitions email your entries to ops@derwenthoward.com.au with the name of the competition **ONLY** in the subject line. Email entries are entitled to one entry (multiple entries will be deleted!). Alternatively, send clearly marked postal entries to OPS competitions PO BOX 1037, Bondi Junction 1355. Please include your name, age and address with your answer on the back of an envelope. Chance plays no part in determining winners. Competitions close 09/09/2009. Winners will be notified by mail.



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Fantasy
violence

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PG

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Violence



PlayStation Portable



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Speak to us!

LETTER OF THE MONTH!

ONLINE DECLINE

Hey guys, long-time reader first-time writer. Love the mag and keep it up!

Let me get straight to the point. Now we all love online gaming, playing it out with your friends or with some total stranger online play extends the hours of a game into the hundreds. But there comes a point where it can become really annoying.

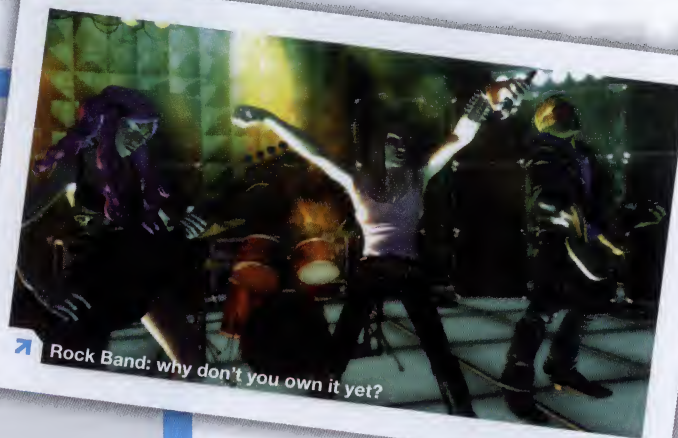
I was playing *Battlefield: Bad Company* online with my headset plugged in so I could communicate with the other guys about the match, as soon as the match starts I hear some guy arguing with someone in the background about how good a movie was. Or stuffing yourself with chips and munching so loud you can't hear the gunshots from your own rifle. That's great that you're having a snack but I don't think that everyone should hear every crunch of your food. Then we have the *Australian Idol* wannabes, people CONSTANTLY singing some tune in a super high-pitched voice that lasts throughout the whole match,

non-stop! Seriously, if you want to sing go buy *SingStar*, don't give everyone a headache with your screaming. Unfortunately there is no option of kicking other players, it's computer controlled. The headset is for talking about the game and how to take out that sniper, not about sharing your so-called 'talents' with the rest of us. This is a growing problem that frustrates everyone. What do you guys think?

Alex Panayotov, VIC

We hear you Alex, and we do have a few thoughts on this. You're right, the anonymity of online gaming has turned many normal people into complete dicks. Suddenly, completely maladjusted persons who'd lack the stones to behave so badly in public are free to act in any way they please, without fear. We believe a naming and shaming smear campaign could be a positive step in removing this kind of behaviour from our online games.

If we can find just a few of these tools and make public their names and addresses, along with their particular online crime, maybe we can scare the rest of them into stepping into line at the risk of a complete flogging. Failing that, better technology to kick idiots out of our games should suffice.



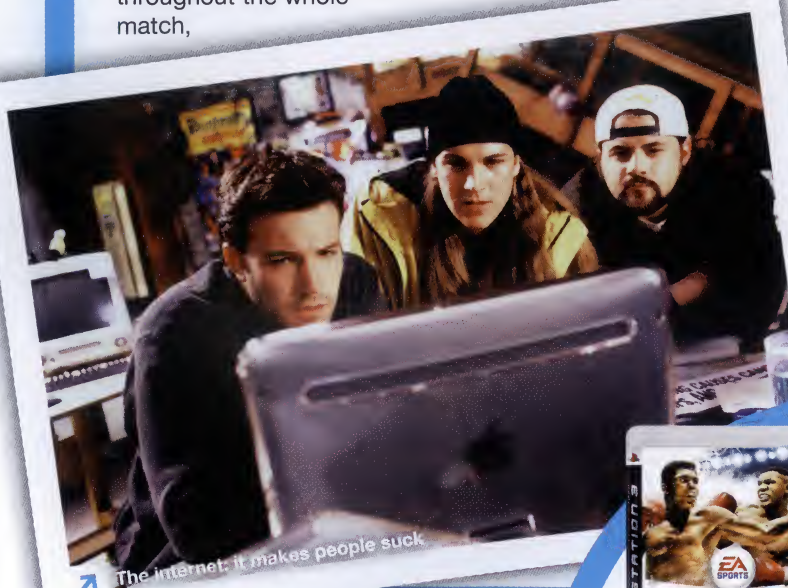
FOR THOSE ABOUT TO STOP (WE SALUTE YOU)

I am writing this in response to Adrian's letter in the June issue regarding his *Guitar Hero* drums. I had similar issues with mine. I went through two yellow cymbals and a guitar. Same old same old – all worked fine for a week then died again. I got so angry I just put the lot in the bin as I was out of warranty. Now don't do what I did! I have since found out that by law in Australia just because something comes with a 90-day warranty doesn't make it so, providing you still have the product (doh). I have spoken to the ACCC and they said after paying \$280 for something it should last between one and two years and if it doesn't we have the right to a full refund. If we all pull together and contact the ACCC and take action, Activision may have to pull its rubbish hardware off the shelves and replace it with some quality hardware that works and refund just about everyone who purchased *Guitar Hero World Tour*. I love *Guitar Hero* as a game, however I will reluctantly be boycotting all GH games (even GH *Metallica*, which I was so looking forward to) until Activision gets its act together, and call for all GH fans to do the same.

P.S. I strongly think this letter should be published to inform other game owners of their rights!

Dale Mallory, via email

*Strong words Dale. It's a shame you've chosen to skip *Guitar Hero Metallica* – it really is a better game overall than *Guitar Hero World Tour* to be honest – but we understand your frustration with your failing equipment. Between the crew here and those close to us we've had a guitar refuse to work properly out of the box and a dodgy cymbal – but no other problems so far. For those that have, however, pursue satisfaction. In the meantime, pick up *Rock Band*; it's cheaper, better and none of our gear has stopped working.*



LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS... FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 4

The letter of the month this issue will receive a copy of *Fight Night Round 4* for their troubles – enjoy!

DON'T STOP THE CO-OP

OPS, long-time subscriber – first-time writer. First, I really like the fresh look magazine and especially the “Its Like...” information box.

Anyway, my letter isn't about the “Its Like...” information box, it's all about the lack of co-op games around these days. Recently I invested in superb game called *Resident Evil 5*. What attracted me mostly to this wonderful game was the online co-op play. This meant that I could, over my broadband connection, play cooperatively with a very good friend of mine in another state. I must say that I have replayed this game through three times now with my mate just because I can crack a beer, put in the headset, sit on the couch, play the PlayStation 3 and chat to very good mate. It truly enhances any game.

I'm disappointed that such blockbuster titles coming out soon, namely *Ghostbusters*, don't support such play. I mean, who wouldn't want to apply the same concept as I described above over a potentially nuts game?! I just don't understand.

I think that the good people at Capcom have catered for such a user. Some of the other developers need to



7 We ain't 'fraid of no ghost

take a good look at this *RE5* model because I know that if a game offers story mode co-op, I will buy it. It doesn't matter what the freaking game is, just the ability to share it with good mates that you don't live close to can outweigh a favoured genre.

Anyway – that's my rant. Have a good one guys and keep the *Modern Warfare 2* gear coming!

Wade Rushton, via email

We hear you man, co-op is great. Ghostbusters may not have story-mode co-op (we don't think the deliberate pace of Ghostbusters would support more than one player anyway) but it does have standalone co-op missions for up to four-players. As for upcoming co-op games, Army of Two: The 40th Day looks surprisingly great, and Modern Warfare 2 is set to feature some kind of standalone co-op mode also.

SPEAK TO US

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on OPS, on games – on *anything* that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

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Speak to us!

AVATARDS

Everyone who owns a PS3 and has a PSN account will understand where I'm coming from. Is it just me or is Sony lacking in the Avatar department? Sure there's a fair few to pick from, but it's like having 100 rotten apples compared to 10 fresh ones. Who wants to have a toothbrush head as their avatar?

"Hey dude, check out my Avatar."

"No way! Your toothbrush head has toothpaste on it!"

"Yep, new update!"

"Wicked! I'm going to change mine to the upside-down chocolate genitals then!"

If they made the PlayStation Eye they must want people to be able to use it on more than a "virtual aquarium", it's just a waste!

Which brings me to my next rant, TROPHIES! Sure they're great fun to collect and add extra hours onto even the most shit game, but there is no actual reward. They need to make items in the PS store that you can

purchase with Trophy points. For example, once you collect all Trophies from a game, you can purchase some of the game's DLC for free!

Just think for a second: imagine PS3 with "create your own Avatar" and "collect Trophies to get crap"? C'mon Sony!

Dean Heffernan, via email

We'll start really worrying about Avatars if and when we ever find ourselves without legs, and the ability to walk around and meet up with people we know 'for reals' they empower us with. Come to think of it, even without legs that's possible. You even get a better parking spot. Your idea for Trophies, however, is not without merit. If you've collected all the Trophies from a particular game, getting something for it (or at least a DLC discount) isn't a bad concept.



IT SHOULD BE A GAME!



PROCRASTINATION: THE LAST MINUTE

By Kenny McDonald, NSW

A game of deadline chicken. You can choose to play as a teenager who should be studying for exams, a man who has to mow the lawn (instructed by his wife) or an employee for a game magazine with an upcoming deadline. Wander around, finding the most creative ways to distract yourself from the task at hand, earning high scores for the amount of time you are able to waste before you run out of ideas, and how much you are able to get done in the last minute. Make sure you aren't spotted by your parents, wife, or boss. Otherwise it's a major point penalty, and you're forced to start work early. Fight off your duties through countless levels, where ways to distract yourself and justify your laziness, constantly decrease. And remember: a true procrastinator can always find something else to do.

The legendary feature, 'It Should Be a Game', is back by popular demand! Naturally, since we just brought it back an' all, we haven't received that many entries as of yet. That's where you come in. Send us all your game ideas, funny, serious, insane or otherwise to ops@derwenthoward.com.au. If you happen to have any 'mad Photoshop skillz' then flex those muscles and send us some pics to go with it. It'll make your entry all the more sweet. Get cracking people!

THE PlayStation. CROSSWORD!

TEST YOUR BRAIN TO WIN A GAME!

How to enter: Use the letters from the coloured squares and re-arrange them to form the name of a videogame character. Send your answers to OPS@derwenthoward.com.au with OPS Crossword as the subject. Entries close August 12.

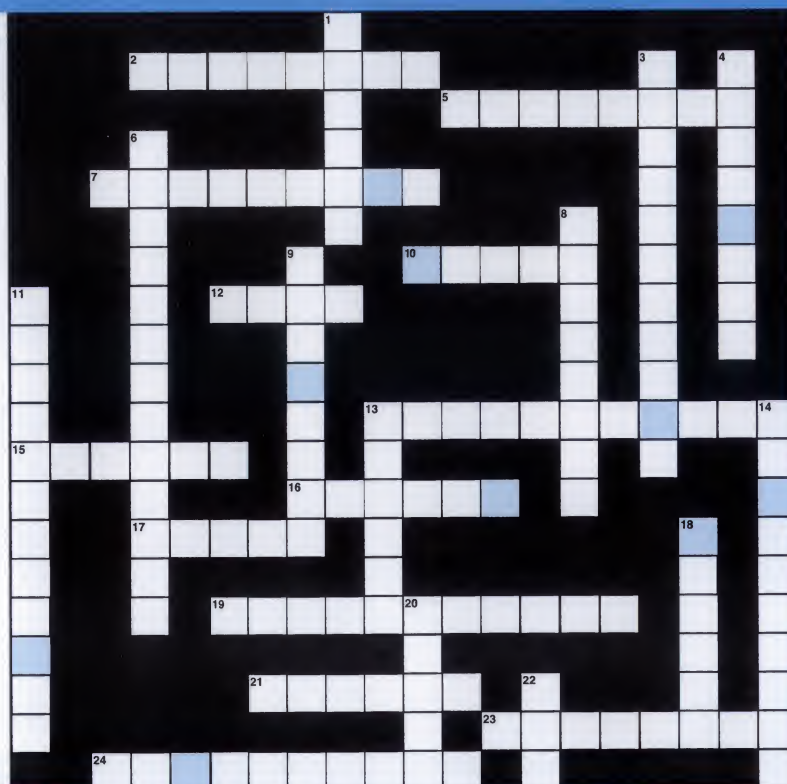
ACROSS

2. Tom Hansen is the main star in this horror game (4,4)
5. Everyone loves clump spirit, we love (8)
7. A DUCK LORD might like this PS2 RPG (4, 5)
10. What was *Tombi* known as in Japan? (5)
12. Only racing game to feature an HSV Maloo (4)
13. The soul burns in this fighter (11)
15. Open the door to Phantomile, and let in (6)
16. The mob responsible for Duke Nukem, 3D (6)
17. PSP shooter, (5) *Arms* (5)
19. Warhammer's PS2 FPS (4, 7)
21. The name of Crystal Dynamic's joker in *Pandemonium* (6)

23. Company responsible for the *Wipeout* aesthetic, The Designer's (8)
24. Namco's light-gun series (4, 6)

DOWN

1. Capcom's other hack and slash, *Chaos* (6)
3. (11): *Symphony of the Night* (11)
4. Flash your lights and join the (8) Club (8)
6. The Duck Lord's been superseded by the CRACKLED RHINO (4,9)
8. A PS2 online game, (8) *Online Arena* (8)
9. Lara's original designer (4, 4)
11. Fictional mastermind in Rockstar's *Manhunt*, Lionel (12)
13. *Dead To Rights* star pooch (6)
14. Nathan Hale is leading the (10)
18. Species that Dexter belongs to (6)
20. Had his heart ripped out by his brother in 1998 (5)
22. Synaesthesia-based shooter by SEGA (3)



Down 1. NUKACOLACLEAR 2. GATE88 3. POLYBIUS 4. CURLY 5. FURRIES 6. CANCELLER 7. KIRESH 8. MONTREAL 9. ID 10. CROSSHESSTREAMS 11. DASHINGO 12. SERVANTS 13. JAPANESE 14. JAPANESE 15. JAPANESE 16. JAPANESE 17. JAPANESE 18. JAPANESE 19. JAPANESE 20. JAPANESE 21. JAPANESE 22. JAPANESE 23. JAPANESE 24. JAPANESE

1. MATCH THE STAR TO THEIR VIDEO GAME COUNTERPART



2. HOW MANY NEED FOR SPEED TITLES HAVE BEEN RELEASED SO FAR FOR ALL PLAYSTATION PLATFORMS?

3. WHAT GAME FEATURES THE CHARACTERS AIAI, MEEMEE, BABY AND GONGON?

4. WHO AM I?

With the help of the Professor and Natalie, I'm chasing a primate with evil intentions.



5. NAME THE PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR VIRTUA FIGHTER IV, OUTRUN AND FERRARI F355 CHALLENGE

6. WHICH OF THESE GAMES IS NOT SET IN NEW YORK CITY

- a. Prototype
- b. Resistance 2
- c. The Darkness
- d. King Kong

7. NAME TWO GAMES, APART FROM METAL GEAR, THAT HIDEO KOJIMA HAS MADE

THE OPS QUIZ THING

Our imaginatively titled quiz will sort out the wheat from the chaff. Prove your worth with these brainbusters!

CUTTINGS

TV TROUBLES

Can you please tell me which TV is best to play PS3 games on, plasma or LCD?

Mr Joshua, via email

We're going to say LCD, but that's because it's what we have here at OPS. Honestly, the differences between the two aren't that pronounced anymore – unless you're an AV geek (and if you were, you probably wouldn't be asking us that question. Wait, Mr Joshua? Didn't Riggs and Murtaugh kill you in the first Lethal Weapon?

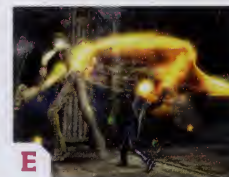
WAY OFF

Um, I think it would be great if the Halo series comes to PS3. I'm sure you've heard a lot of requests for it, but it would be great.

John Williams, via email

We think it'd be great if Subway started making Big Macs so we wouldn't ever have to go back to Maccas, but it isn't going to happen. We'll cut you some slack because you're a young bloke, but no – this won't happen. Microsoft is not going to publish one of its games on a competitor's console. Just play Call of Duty, it's far better anyway.

8. IDENTIFY THE GAMES FROM THE SCREENSHOTS:



Answers: 1. Henry Rollins = Mace Griffin, Ron Perlman = Jagger Valance, Ray Lotta = Tommy Vercetti 2. 11 3. Super Monkey Ball 4. Spike 5. Yu Suzuki 6. Resistance 2 7. Zone of the Enders, Policenauts 8. a) Viewtiful Joe b) Rapid Racer c) NASCAR 09 d) The Warriors e) Ghost Rider f) Def Jam Icon

SUBSCRIPTION

NOTORIOUS!

Chronicling the extraordinary life of Christopher "The Notorious B.I.G." Wallace, *Notorious* follows the young rapper from the tough streets of Brooklyn to the heights of superstardom as he juggles the increasing demands of fatherhood, marriage and a music career. Amid chaos and controversy, Biggie's remarkable talent and fierce determination help to solidify his legacy as one of hip-hop's greatest MCs. *Notorious* is available on DVD and Blu-ray July 15!

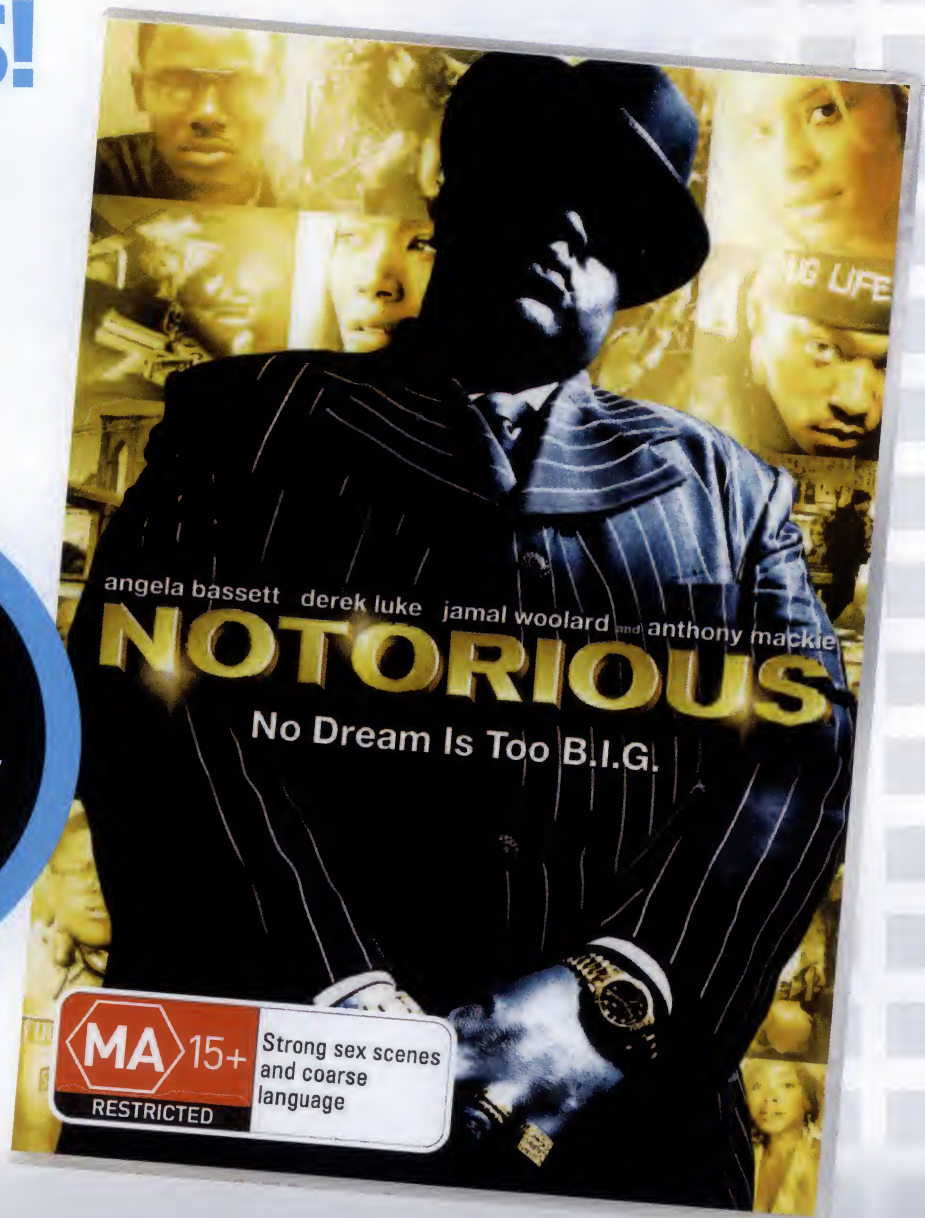
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E3 2009

It's interesting that E3, the world's largest videogames expo, occurs in Los Angeles, the home of Hollywood. It's hard to say whether or not the film industry ever expected it'd be facing such stiff competition from games when the show was first welcomed into the movie Mecca, but the battle continues to heat up. E3 2009, the 15th annual E3 summit, saw a righteous return to the flashier format of booths and boobs - in that order. Spitting in the face of the ignorant and kicking the financial crisis in the balls, E3 2009 was the best sign yet that things have never been better for gamers. Three hectic days and nearly 100 games later it was all over for us - but your experience of what E3 had to offer is just beginning. Here's the full report you can't afford to miss.



Words: Luke Reilly

SONY

Sony had a huge range of games on show, almost all of which were playable – either on the show floor itself or in Sony Computer Entertainment Europe's additional private room.

Nobody hates the Drake

UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES

Simply put, *Uncharted 2* is the PS3's 800-pound gorilla. *God of War III* is neat, *GT5* will be big and Sony has been banging on a lot about *Heavy Rain* – but *Uncharted 2* is the PS3 game that people won't stop talking about. Why? Graphics other developers wish they could replicate, production values that put half of Hollywood to shame and thrill-a-minute gameplay. That's why.

We saw quite a bit of *Uncharted 2* at the show, including multiplayer – you can read about that on page 56. The most rollicking stuff, as you'd expect, is the single-player story – and it's as cinematic and action-packed as ever.

Even more refined, and even more remarkable looking, than the first instalment, *Uncharted 2* drew massive gasps from the cheering crowd. We watched in awe as Drake sprinted and sprung across the rooftops of a Nepalese city with his new gal pal in tow, dogged by a heavily-armed helicopter. With the gunship snapping at his heels Drake eventually makes his way into a collapsing building – one that he and his brunette buddy leap from as it topples to the ground. The crowd loved it, and so did we.

The new girl wrapping her lips and legs around Drake is Chloe, and she's Australian – a nice touch, considering the last Australian videogame star of note we can think of is Crash Bandicoot, and Naughty Dog created him too. We can report Elena has made a return too, which adds a cool dynamic between the two leading ladies.

Most games are plot driven, but the *Uncharted* series is character driven, co-lead game designer Richard Lemarchand told us during our demo. The happy side effect of this is a game that's as fun to watch as it is to play. It's amazing. *Uncharted 2* is a huge step forward in every department, and there wasn't anything at the show that displayed near the same level of fidelity and general awesomeness.

HEAVY RAIN

This is an odd one. Sony is really putting a considerable amount of weight behind this game. *Heavy Rain* is a stunning visual achievement and a great demonstration of what the PS3 is capable of, graphically. It's clever too, and rich. There's no getting around the fact that it is, however, an interactive movie. *Fahrenheit* – Quantic Dream's last title – is fondly remembered among fans but it's certainly by no means mainstream.

Perhaps that's something we should be praising though. If *Uncharted 2* is Sony's summer popcorn blockbuster, then *Heavy Rain* is its thoughtful film-noir piece.

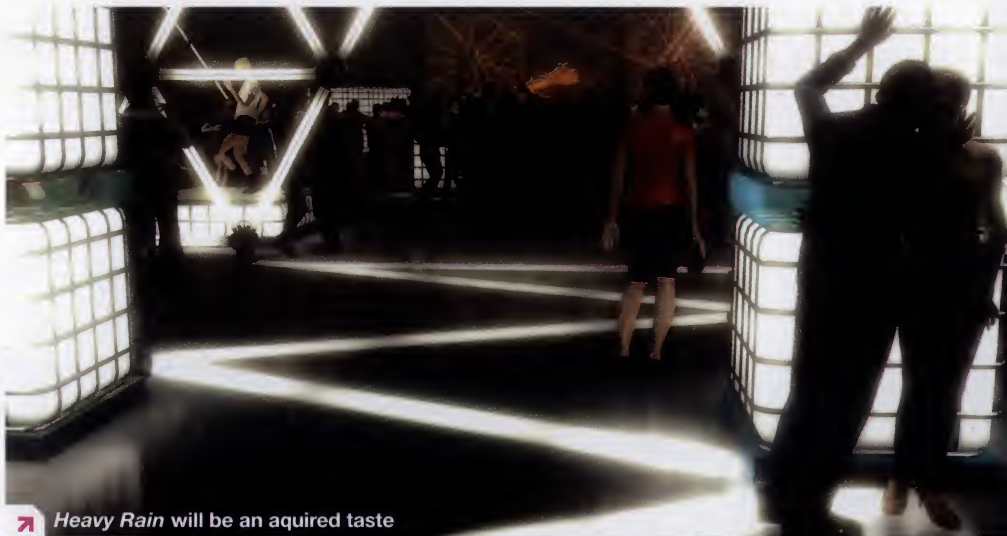
The game itself is really just a series of context sensitive actions, puzzles, quick-time events and dialogue choices. For instance, during a behind-closed-doors demo Quantic Dream boss played through a level where journalist Madison Paige found herself stripping down to bra and panties in front of a man with a gun with a sequence of button taps and stick twists. It was equally sexy and unsettling.

Like we said, it is clever though. If a character dies, the game doesn't end. Rather, it switches to another character, with the events of the previous character's death affecting the story. In fact, it's apparently possible to complete the game even if all four characters are dead. Still, whether or not the public is going to warm to a game where you rotate the analogue stick to apply lipstick and unbutton your blouse remains to be seen.

SOCOM: U.S. NAVY SEALS FIRETEAM BRAVO 3

More of the same, really, although it features online campaign co-op. Still, the PSP is back in a big way, and this is just more proof.

Heavy Rain is a stunning visual achievement... It's clever too, and rich

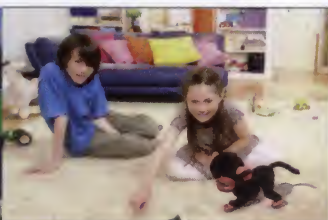


Heavy Rain will be an aquired taste



MODNATION RACERS

LittleBigPlanet for kart racers. Looks quite rad, to be honest – seriously. The track-making tools look absolutely fantastic – limited only by your imagination. More next month.



EYEPET

Uses the PlayStation Eye camera to allow a weird-looking virtual pet to interact with people and objects in the real world. We're not really sure what it is. Some kind of cat-monkey. Kids will dig it.



GRAN TURISMO

It's been donkey's years since this was first teased, and it's finally here. Almost anyway. Playable on the show floor, *Gran Turismo* for PSP is a pretty impressive piece of kit. Series creator Kazunori Yamauchi continued to stress that *Gran Turismo* for PSP is a fully-fledged GT title, not a bastard offshoot. The game will feature over 800

cars – around 100 more than *Gran Turismo 4* on PS2, including Ferrari. All 35 tracks from *GT4* will be included too, with over 60 layouts, and ad-hoc multiplayer is supported for up to four players.

Want more? The game runs at a silky 60 frames-per-second and features a new trading system to allow players to acquire cars quicker by working with friends. It still feels satisfyingly sim-like too.

WHITE KNIGHT CHRONICLES

It's an RPG. That's about all we gleaned from our 60 seconds with it. It's due next year in Europe and down under, but it's been out in Japan forever.

It's really, really, ridiculously violent



If you ain't first, you're last

GRAN TURISMO 5

To say we were surprised at the almost zero presence of *Gran Turismo 5* at the show would be a vast understatement. All we got was a trailer, with no further explanation. Odd, particularly considering that *Gran Turismo* is Sony's best-selling first party series, Microsoft's *GTS* competitor *Forza Motorsport 3* was making quite a splash elsewhere at the show and GT-creator Kazunori Yamauchi has told the press, "I want to release it as fast as I can, but *GTS* for us, when you talk about its status, it's at a point we can release it any time we want, but we can always keep working on it." Translated for the second time: it's basically done, but you can't have it yet. The E3 trailer itself revealed *GTS* will feature both the World Rally Championship and NASCAR in addition to its usual fare (with *GTS* offering 'proper' rallying, we suddenly find ourselves less disappointed in Codemasters and *DiRT 2*). A WRC Impreza with scratches and a crumpled bonnet hints that damage is finally a feature. With damage and real-world championships, *GTS* could become the spiritual successor to V8 Supercars 3 that *Race Driver: GRID* quite simply wasn't.

MOTORSTORM ARCTIC EDGE

MotorStorm hits PSP. Set in Alaska and features snowmobiles and snowplows. From Bigbig Studios, the *Pursuit Force* developer.



Not pictured: the 209 other people in this match

GOD OF WAR III

The spectacularly violent and thoroughly over-the-top playable demo of *God of War III* drew the longest queue of the show. It's a very familiar-feeling game, so returning fans won't be accosted by meaningless changes made for little reason. Hack, slash, grab and jump – the fundamental foundations of *God of War* as you already know it haven't changed. It just looks noticeably better. Like your wife in a school uniform. The first handful of bloody encounters against low-level grunts showcased a few of Kratos' new moves, like the ability to grab a nearby attacker and use him as a battering ram. Also, if Kratos is ever overwhelmed and trapped beneath a pile of assailants it appears he can leap up and hurl them all in every direction. Further down the track we saw Kratos hitch a ride beneath a harpie by grabbing it's legs and repeatedly stabbing it, gut a centaur (literally; offal and intestines spilled out of its sliced-open belly), kill a chimera by breaking the horn off its own head and thrusting it through its eye and hijack a cyclops by leaping onto its back and grabbing a fistful of its face. *God of War III* takes graphic violence to a new level. Towards the end of demo Kratos is required to acquire the head of Helios, which can be used to light dark areas and blind enemies. He 'acquires' said head by ripping it off a still-breathing Helios himself. With his bare hands. It's hardcore. The demo ends after a breakneck flight through some caverns using Icarus' wings, cutting out as Kratos hurls himself towards the huge fire Titan Perses. Did we mention Perses had been tooling around in the background the whole time? Epic.

It just looks noticeably better.
Like your wife in a school uniform

MAG

256 people. It's a lot. When Sony was moments from showcasing *MAG* during its pre-E3 press conference, all 256 people participating in the live battle about to take place on the big screen were displayed with a name and photo to wild applause from the crowd. It's an unprecedented game. There's no first-person shooter like it. It's like *WarHawk* on horse testosterone.

MAG is huge, and, on paper, sounds like a complete shiftright. 128 people can't be expected to work together, particularly considering that a good deal of people who play online have debilitating communication issues. However, *MAG* does its best to make you and the players surrounding you small parts in a bigger equation. Players are divided into eight-player squads – which is far more manageable. Four squads form

a platoon, and four platoons form a company. All 128 players will work towards a single goal – winning, presumably – but there are objectives spread all across the large maps to keep everyone busy. If it works, it should be brilliant.

As you rank up you'll earn leadership abilities. If and when you end up in charge of a squad or a platoon you'll be able to call in airstrikes, for instance. You'll also be able to issue orders to your subordinates. They can ignore you, but following orders nets you more experience than taking the lone wolf approach.

MAG feels good, and it's been created with the panache you'd expect from Zipper – the creators of the *SOCOM* series. Here's hoping it works properly upon its release – we just keep asking ourselves, how many of those 256 players are going to be total muppets?



THE LAST GUARDIAN

The new project from the *Ico* and *Shadow of the Colossus* team. Features a giant rat-parrot looking thing you just KNOW is going to die at the end. Looks magnificent.

FINAL FANTASY XIV ONLINE

A massively multiplayer online game that Sony blindsided us with. Exclusive to PS3 and coming out in 2010 – the same year as *Final Fantasy XIII*. Unexpected.

PIXELJUNK MONSTERS DELUXE

The radular PSN game of the more-or-less same name comes to PSP, and there was much rejoicing. We've wasted a lot of time playing the PSN original, we'll say that much.

RATCHET AND CLANK FUTURE: A CRACK IN TIME

Continues on from where *Quest for Booty* left off, features time travel, still looks incredible. Really, how much more do you need to know?

AGENT

Spy game set in the 1970s, developed by GTAIV studio Rockstar North and exclusive to PS3. Potentially the biggest thing since *GTA* went 3D, and a massive coup by Sony. We're dying to see more.



AGENT

EA

EA had arguably the best line-up of all the third-party publishers with its focus on quality AND quantity. EA showcased a lot of titles, but just how decent the bulk of these titles were was seriously surprising.



DRAGON AGE: ORIGINS

It's got a kick-arse trailer set to the strains of Marilyn Manson's 'This Is The New Shit', and sex. Overall it seems a bit bland, but it was only brief demo.

NEED FOR SPEED SHIFT

It's been a while since a *Need for Speed* title didn't elicit the same excitement as a bowel movement, with the underwhelming *NFS Undercover* doing very little to break the mould. *NFS SHIFT* is shaping up to be a significantly better experience. It'll cater to differing styles of racing, with Precision points awarded for smooth cornering and slick passing, or Aggression points for slamming into rivals at top speeds. We dig the direction they're going in, giving both ends of the spectrum a look in rather than focusing on one side. After being gobsmacked by the super sexy, silky dashboard visuals, complete with blurred vision after collisions and a tangible sense of acceleration, we're ready to change our tune.

BRÜTAL LEGEND

Definitely one of the best games of the show, *Brütal Legend* oozes charm out of every orifice.

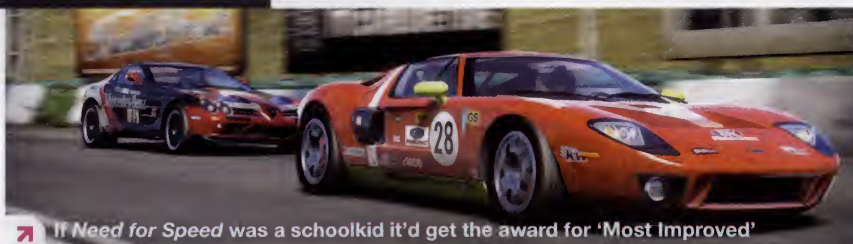
As the greatest roadie of all time, Eddie Riggs (Jack Black), is mysteriously transported to a Heavy Metal Heaven, where he must harness the awesome power of metal to save the lovely Ophelia, start a revolution and defeat the evil Lord Doviculus and his legion of followers. With recently announced cameos from some of rock's elite like Rob Halford, Lemmy Kilmister, Lars and Lita Ford and the incomparable Ozzy Osbourne, this is Shafer's salute to those who are about to rock, and we're getting more and more amped by the minute just thinking about it.

Our greatest fears that the game itself would feel clunky or half-baked were set aside the moment we got our hands-on. *Brütal Legend* is great fun to play – it feels good.

The sense of humour is spot on too. The game's exaggerated cartoon visuals still manage to convey Jack Black's subtle expressions. The dialogue is perfect – confronted with another batch of cloaked baddies he's been dispatching for the past 20 or so minutes, Eddie Riggs groans. "Awwwww, I'm f—king sick of you guys," he exclaims. Written here it seems innocuous enough, but delivered in Jack Black's signature vocal style at that particular moment in the game it's an absolute side-splitter.

When we tell you that Rocktober 2009 will be a month etched in our memories forever, do we really need to tell you why?

This game can't arrive soon enough.



BATTLEFIELD 1943

A downloadable multiplayer shooter, the latest in the esteemed franchise. Runs on the *Battlefield: Bad Company* Frostbite engine, so expect plenty of destruction in the South Pacific setting.

BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY 2

The multiplayer was on show at E3. It still seems totally robust, but it was hard to get much from our brief stint. No singleplayer info is a shame – we want to know about it.

DANTE'S INFERNO

It's truly remarkable just how similar *Dante's Inferno* is to *God of War*. If imitation is the finest form of flattery, Kratos should be blushing red. The camera angles, the combat, the interface – everything. It's crazy.

It also looks very, very good. The E3 demo began on the bank of the River Styx; a man begs

Dante for help, illustrating the 'punish or absolve' choice system (punish means kill; Dante is so BA he can kill people who are already dead). After hopping on a boat that's actually the head of a giant beast, killing gluttony minions who explode diarrhoea all over you and killing what could well be unbaptised babies with blades on their arms the demo was over. Immense scale. Looks hot.

THE SABOTEUR

Setting a game in WWII and running it through some crazy black and white filters sounds like a recipe for disaster, but you'd be best served not ignoring this title.

An open-world action game set in occupied Paris, *The Saboteur* sees main man Sean Devlin socking it to the Nazis with a series of sneak attacks and all-out assaults. *The Saboteur* combines driving, stealth and disguises, shooting and some *Assassin's Creed*-lite acrobatics into a truly unique game.

The key thing to remember is the visual style. In Nazi-laden areas everything is black and white, with red the only colour. In areas you've been kicking German cornhole, things will be more vibrant.

Sean is a cool character too – cursing silently to himself, chain smoking like a chimney and a real ladies man. He has character.

The Saboteur looks top shelf. It's like *Mercenaries* crossed with *Medal of Honor* crossed with *Assassin's Creed* crossed with... *Schindler's List*. With tits.

It looks good. Trust us.

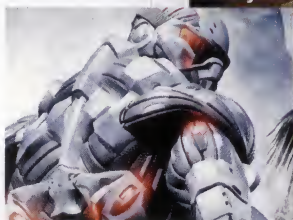


And you thought you were sick of World War II games...



EA SPORTS MMA

Mixed martial arts is one of the fastest growing sports in the world, and EA is getting on board. Expect it in 2010. Fingers crossed for Kimbo Slice – that bearded bloke who shits nails.



CRYSIS 2

Announced during the EA press conference, *Crysis 2* is the sequel to the hardware-maxing PC original. Virtually nothing is known about it, other than the fact it'll be the first game to run on CryEngine 3.



FIFA 10

As the almost yearly battle for supremacy between *FIFA* and *Pro Evo* begins anew, we got a peek at *FIFA 10*'s skirt at E3, and we saw everything – we're not shy to admit it. To the untrained eye you'd be pressed to see the differences, but to aficionados they'll be immediately apparent. Players off the ball move about far more realistically with a palpable intensity and ball handling has been tweaked to never-before-seen levels. Elevating the previous 8-way control system to full 360° will immediately give you a whole new bag of precise tricks in your arsenal. You excited yet? We sure as hell are, we may even have spied Ellis running about the office with his jersey over his head screaming "Gooooooooaaaaaalllllllllll!"



NHL 10

Apparently the team has spent a lot of time getting the fighting just right. For instance, it goes into first-person view for punch-ups now. Um, we're sure the hockey has improved too. Probably.



G.I. JOE: THE RISE OF COBRA

Okay, so this was probably the poorest game EA had at E3. Not pretty, and not exactly thrilling. It's got online co-op... but really, *Army of Two: The 40th Day* kills it.



MADDEN NFL 10

EA has dropped the speed of the game by about 5% to make it more realistic, and there's a full online franchise mode now. That caused quite a stir at the E3 press conference, for the six people in this country who care.

You can fake a surrender... before pulling your backup pieces

ARMY OF TWO: THE 40TH DAY

Army of Two: The 40th Day – there's a reason why they're not calling it 'Army of Two 2' – looks good. Like the original, it's completely built with co-op in mind – but it's a massive improvement. Set sometime after the original *Army of Two*, *The 40th Day* sees Rios and Salem running their own private military company and embarking on a routine mission in Shanghai. When terrorists attack and begin destroying the city, the masked meatheads are forced to act. It's a bit of a dark horse this game. It all seems like straightforward third-person action until you start listening to some of the little features. For instance, you can fake a surrender – raising your arms and walking towards the enemy, before pulling your backup pieces and blowing them away. You can deliberately wound your foes and draw their scumbag comrades out of cover. You can take squad leaders hostage and encourage their underlings to lay down their arms, before either restraining them or executing them. *The 40th Day* has been fashioned for a far more refined co-op feel, and it shows. More teamwork is needed. Far better than we expected.



ACTIVISION

Activision was also busy making a lot of noise at E3 2009 - literally. The stand was easily the noisiest of the show. Handy hint, if you didn't hear it the second time either, just nod and smile.

MODERN WARFARE 2

It's no secret that *Modern Warfare 2* was the game most people at E3 came to see, and tucked away in a small invitation-only room was the only way to see it. It didn't disappoint. With Infinity Ward heads Jason West and Vince Zampella directing the action, the *Modern Warfare 2* demo kicked off high on the Tian Shan Range in Kazakhstan. Players will become Sgt. Gary "Roach" Sanderson, and the surviving hero from the first game, "Soap" MacTavish has been promoted to Captain (taking the place of Captain Price as team leader). Roach is part of what Zampella has jokingly called the International Coalition of Badasses, a group made up of Rangers, plus CIA, Delta Force, and British SAS operators.

The demo level itself takes place early on in the game with Roach and Soap tasked with infiltrating a Russian airfield to retrieve data from a crashed satellite. The level begins with some ice climbing, before becoming a quick yet cautious romp into the airfield itself. There's a snowstorm brewing so, to help, Roach has a heartbeat sensor

attached to his silenced rifle. After plugging their way into the base, silently liquidating anyone in their path, Roach plants a charge on a large fuel tank and the two separate to carry out their objectives. Once completed, however, Soap is sprung. He tells Roach to go to plan B, which involves blowing the charge and shooting their way out of the hangar they were trapped in and escaping.

Some Ruskies on snowmobiles give chase as Soap and Roach begin to make their way down the mountain, but they can be commandeered. Soap and Roach, on a snowmobile each, begin to tear down the mountain. The vehicle section is all player-controlled, and you can fire as you fang down the mountainside. After a desperate chase, a nasty downhill section peppered with trees and a ludicrous jump, Soap and Roach make it to their extraction point, and the demo is over.

It's all cleverly stage-managed in typical Infinity Ward fashion, but it's just as thrilling as we'd anticipated. The visuals have improved, as has Infinity Ward's streaming technology - which means bigger levels that are better looking. Rad.



TRANSFORMERS: REVENGE OF THE FALLEN

We had to go and play it somewhere else, like *Guitar Hero Van Halen*. Seems like an improvement on the first one, and apparently boasts co-op - which should help.

SINGULARITY

Raven's time-bending shooter doesn't look too shabby. The whole island is super-unstable, so some things will age and crumble right before your eyes. Pretty obvious puzzles though.



He's out of time



"Is anyone else cold?"



When his baby smiles at him he goes to Rio

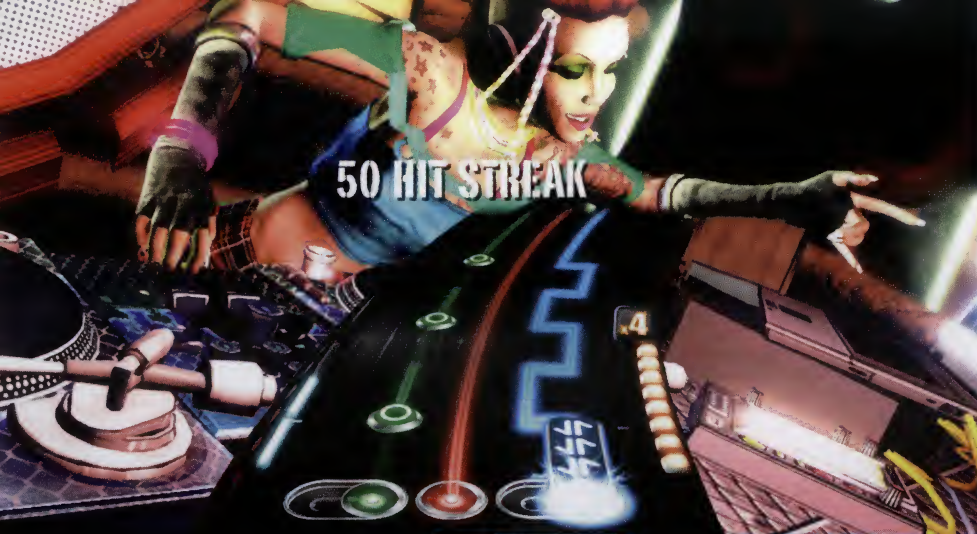


"Close your eyes men! They're using laser pointers!"



BLUR

When them dudes that brung you *Project Gotham Racing* throw away their own rule book, say forget this *Driving Miss Daisy* crap, and bring on some heavy weaponry into the mix, it's enough to make anyone sit up and take notice. We did. In a kind of cross between *PGR* and *Wipeout*, the look is far removed from the toolled up precision machines to a new urban setting, more suited to whipping out glo-sticks and the younger generation. Easing you in slowly, each car has two slots for power-ups, whether it's nitrous, EMPs to wipe out the competition, or 'Barge' to rip anything around you a new one. Featuring massive 20 car races it's a unique racing game, although some concessions seem to have been made to the visuals to accommodate such a huge field.



DJ HERO

It's easy to be cynical about *DJ Hero*, because it certainly does seem like a well-timed cash-in riding on the coattails of the stupidly successful *Guitar Hero* series. It's more than that though.

DJ Hero is loaded with a glut of exclusive remixes and mash-ups of popular songs. FreeStyle Games actually licensed over 100 songs and created around 80 unique mixes exclusively for *DJ Hero*. You won't hear this stuff anywhere else. There'll also be tracks mixed by 15 guest pro DJs, including DJ Shadow and DJ AM.

During our presentation the boys from FreeStyle played Gwen Stefani's 'Hollaback Girl' vs. Rick James' 'Give It To Me', and it's great. Word is there's also an interesting Rihanna and Motörhead, but we didn't hear it.

The interface itself is similar to *Guitar Hero*, but tough to adequately describe here. The turntable controller has three buttons on the turntable itself (it spins 360°), plus a crossfader, an effects dial and a 'Euphoria button' (*DJ Hero*'s Star Power equivalent). It looks more complicated than *Guitar Hero*, but we imagine you'll get used to it. Two DJs can battle on or offline, and it features a DJ vs. guitar feature mode (the demo had a DJ and a guitarist going at it with a mash-up of Beastie Boys' 'Sabotage' vs. Foo Fighters' 'Monkey Wrench'). This mode will boast 10 mixes just for DJs and guitarists). Why there's no DJ vs. drummer mode is a mystery, considering Activision had Blink-182 drummer Travis Barker vs. DJ AM and its huge Monday night bash, but *DJ Hero* still pleasantly surprised.



TONY HAWK RIDE

The old Hawkster hasn't fared too well since *Skate* arrived on the scene and bitch-slapped it into submission. The Birdman needed a revamp, STAT. It looks like fan prayers have been answered, with all Activision's hopes pinned on a spicy peripheral called, oddly enough, the RIDE Board. It works with your basic skating principles, you grab it mid-air for grabs and tricks, shuffle back, then forwards for an ollie, lean back for a manual and the side sensors read if you've kicked it. The early code we sampled was a tad hit and miss, but with plenty of time up their sleeve, and room for improvement, we're confident in the direction they're headed. They obviously realise they can't compete with the borderline genius of *Skate*'s intuitive controls, so slapping down a peripheral for all the neighbourhood punks to shred on could be the solution to their problems.

The old Hawkster hasn't fared too well since *Skate* arrived



Bizarre's new racer is quite bizarre



We hope RIDE isn't a grind

You'll want to make sure you have a decent size TV



GUITAR HERO 5

There was a bearded bloke drinking Heineken, cracking jokes and randomly swearing during the *Guitar Hero 5* behind-closed doors session. Turns out it was Joel Jewett, the founder and current president of Neversoft. Jewett explained to us *Guitar Hero 5*'s new party mode was designed for people who don't know how to play, or if they're drunk. For instance, if your old man

is flailing about at the drums he can opt and have the song carry on without him. Or in Jewett's words, "You're gonna f---k it up! Jesus dad!"

He could also swap instruments. During the demo a few of the Neversoft crew went from drums to bass, and back to drums. It doesn't matter if there are two drummers. It doesn't matter if there are four drummers. Your *GHWT* DLC will work with *GH5*, but no comment on exporting tracks.

WOLFENSTEIN

Raven gave us a dose of Nazi killing goodness, a peek behind The Veil for unearthly shadowy delights and a taste of The Mire...bullet time.



GUITAR HERO VAN HALEN

Oddly enough, *Guitar Hero Van Halen* wasn't available to play at the Activision stand. There was a rolling trailer for it that came around every once in a while on the big screens, but the game itself wasn't there. We actually stumbled across it at the Sony booth. To be perfectly honest, we're finding ourselves more impressed with this than *Guitar Hero 5* at this stage. 'Jump,' 'Panama,' and 'Hot For Teacher' feature, along with tracks by guest artists like Weezer, Queens of the Stone Age, Queen, Blink-182 and Foo Fighters. It won't be without controversy though – only the current Van Halen lineup will feature in the game. Founding bassist Michael Anthony and onetime frontman Sammy Hagar are missing, and Wolfgang Van Halen is in.

MARVEL ULTIMATE ALLIANCE 2

Good guys can suck it long, and suck it hard. E3 was all about Venom and Deadpool. *Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2* is based around the Civil War series, and you can fight on either side (and win with either side).

2K

A low-key showing by 2K, tucked away above the ruckus of the main show floor in one of the more intimate meeting rooms. Aside from its usual array of sports titles, here's 2K's nifty lineup.

MAFIA II

Mafia II was one of the best surprises of the show. We dare say, even at this stage, it's the closest we've seen an open-world game come to matching the majesty of *GTAIV*. At the very least, it's immediately clear *Mafia II* boasts the same level of attention to detail in all aspects – from the pitch-perfect dialogue to the remarkably rich digital world.

Set across 10 years you can expect changing seasons. It isn't just a cosmetic difference, either – seasonal variation has real gameplay implications. During winter, for instance, snow will collect on the flat surfaces of the mid-century autos – but it'll also negatively affect vehicle handling. A solid steel '50s land whale takes to icy roads like a fat man in socks on a freshly waxed blowing lane.

The demo was a shootout in a liquor warehouse. It was short, but it showcased all manner of impressive elements – from the way the protagonist slides into cover to how the goons you're up against take a bullet. As the sunlight from outside trickled through the crates of booze we were stunned at how good this game looks.

The wanted system is the original *Mafia* was quite neat, and somewhat ahead of its time. We pressed them about how it's been tackled in *Mafia II* and were told it's a sophisticated system. You can still get pulled over for a ticket, although you'll want to avoid that if you have a body in the boot – the rozzers are more aggressive this time. The dynamic will change again further into the game as you move up in the mob. 2K Czech will elaborate more on that later, but it sounds promising.

Looks killer, truly. We're really looking forward to seeing more of this.



The shotgun. Manly



BIOSHOCK 2

No single-player for the E3 demo, just multiplayer. It's a bit of a shame arguably, because the multiplayer looks a little dodgy at this stage. It all sounds good initially – set one year before the events of the first *BioShock*, *BioShock 2*'s multiplayer mode revolves around the fall of Rapture and the civil war that tore the idyllic utopia apart. As a civilian, with his or her own apartment, you'll be able to customise your appearance and loadout and set about taking on the population of Rapture with conventional weapons and prototype Plasmids. At one point during the match someone will be able to become a Big Daddy, upon finding a random drop. The problem is it looks like it could become quite unbalanced, although it was a hands-off presentation. We'll keep you posted.



"Merry Christmas, ya filthy animal!"



Why do stereotypes talk like dis, eh?

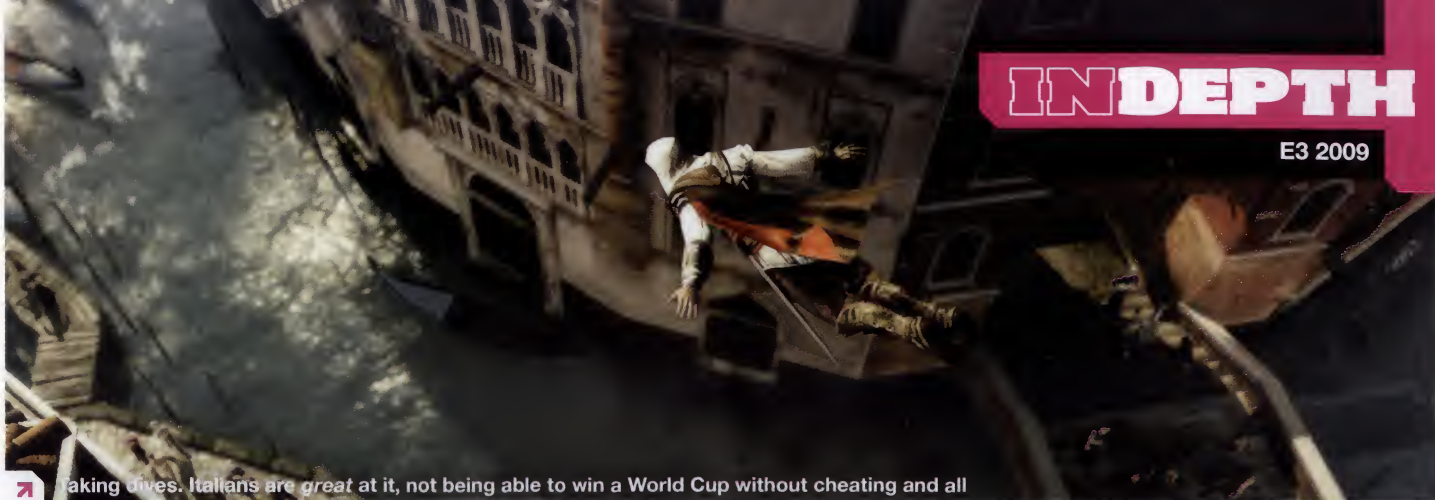


BORDERLANDS

Demoed to us by the ever-enthusiastic head of Gearbox Software Randy Pitchford, *Borderlands* looks tight. The new art style will go some way distinguishing it from other games of ilk, but *Borderlands*' biggest drawcard is its unique approach. Pitchford described the game as an RPS, a role-playing shooter. It's basically a first-person shooter with skill trees, quests, loot and four-player co-op. It's like *Fallout 3* crossed with *World at Warcraft*, fused with *Mad Max*. High-level enemies are called 'Badasses', and you can fight mutant midgets. Should the finished product be worth its salt, *Borderlands* seems like the kind of title that'll attract a dedicated audience.

It's basically a first-person shooter with skill trees, quests, loot and four-player co-op... and you can fight mutant midgets





making dives. Italians are great at it, not being able to win a World Cup without cheating and all

UBISOFT

Ubisoft's very large and French press conference was a bit of a nightmare to get into and was filled mostly with Wii games. We got to see the PS3 lineup at its booth, however – plus girls in shorts.

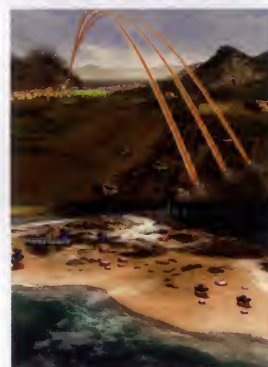
ASSASSIN'S CREED II

No hands-on unfortunately, but we did get to see the game in action. Ubisoft's first public reveal of in-game play for *Assassin's Creed II* saw new bloke Ezio scooting about 14th Century Venice with a killing blade on each arm and a real desire to jam them into the necks of anyone who looks sideways at him.

The E3 demo began at night, in the town square. Minstrels serenade the crowd while the assembled public dance the night away. Ezio, hunched on a bench, is sprung by a guard – although he quickly guts the nosey bastard and leaves the body sat upright in his place. Ezio then slips through the throngs of revellers and clambers up a building. The climbing seems much like it was, although Ezio can spring a little higher than Altair could. Nearing the top, a guard can be seen standing idly on the roof. Hanging from the edge Ezio can lunge up and over, grab the guard and drag him off the roof and into the canal below, where he lands with a scream and

a splash. On top of the roof Ezio finds Leonardo Da Vinci's flying machine, which he proceeds to use to zoom across town. The various bonfires about the place will give the glider height and you can swoop down and knock guards from their perches. Honestly, the flying looked a little 'on-rails', but the proof will be in the pudding. Regardless, after some brief airtime Ezio bails out over the lavish pad of Carlo Grimalde, one of the most powerful men in Venice and a man with a date with death. Some of Ezio's new kills were on show here. With two hidden blades, Ezio can kill two guards simultaneously. He can also disarm enemies, demonstrated when Ezio snatched away an axe from a doomed attacker before returning it to him by burying it between his neck and shoulder.

After taking out Grimalde (the world around both killer and victim temporarily fell away with a flashy VR effect) Ezio vanished from the scene with a smoke bomb and flung himself into the sea. Demo over. Cue grins. Looks good.



R.U.S.E.

This game's going to have a bloody tough time of it. Demoed on its native environment, a large horizontal touch-screen, it's just zany. We watched, completely enthralled, as the demo driver commanded units across a WWII beachhead using only his fingers to swipe and stab at the screen. It was some seriously *Beyond 2000* shit. Using the regular control pads, however, the novelty more-or-less vanishes. The game's got a lot going for it – zooming from grass level out to a tabletop in a war-room looks cool the first few times, deception in an RTS is interesting and it's doing a lot (there are 200 unit types and it's pushing a billion polygons) – but it's niche. Really niche.

With two hidden blades, Ezio can kill two guards simultaneously. He can also disarm enemies



This looks a lot cooler in 3D



R.U.S.E. will probably struggle on consoles

So does this



AVATAR

Ubisoft wheeled out director James Cameron to fill us in on what the film is about during its pre-E3 press conference. He spoke for a long time in front of a giant logo, with nary a teaser trailer to show for it (the film is coming out this year, but no-one outside of film geeks have heard about it). We saw the game itself the next day in a hush-hush closed-doors session so intriguing even Steven Spielberg blagged his way into one. The gimmick is that it's 3D, if you've got a TV capable of displaying it. The game certainly looked admittedly rad on the 103 inch television being used to demo it – apparently it's the BIGGEST TV IN THE WORLD. The 3D trickery meant the jungle undergrowth and character (it's a third-person shooter) have real depth. Beyond that it seems a bit derivative, but we imagine we'll care more about the fiction and the vivid universe Jimmy Cameron has created once we've seen the film. If so, *Avatar: The Game* could prove to be a good companion.

THQ

A moderate display from THQ, with arguably its two biggest and best titles of 2009 already out in the shape of *Red Faction: Guerrilla* and *UFC 2009 Undisputed*.



HOMEFRONT

Another of E3 2009's pleasant surprises, *Homefront* is a perfect example of a first-look done right. We walked into the closed-doors session knowing nothing about it and left extremely enthusiastic. It wasn't thanks to a bunch of slides and some pie-in-the-sky pre-vis either – it was 15-minutes of balls-out gameplay.

There's a reason Kaos Studios was confident enough to unleash its new first-person shooter to the press and play the live gameplay hand early – it's because *Homefront* looks extremely good.

Written by John Milius, *Homefront* has instant credibility. Milius, the scribe behind *Apocalypse Now* and *Red Dawn*, has crafted a story set some 20 years into the future, in the second year of the North Korean occupation of the US. Far-fetched, sure, but most intriguing. As a member of the resistance, it's your job to kick the commies out of the country.

The level of detail on show is commendable. The resistance compound, shown at the beginning of the demonstration, is a living organism. A woman walks by with her baby, and there are people working on equipment and moving items back and forth. What's cool is that it's believable – the stockpiled military gear cleverly juxtaposes the children's bikes you can spot

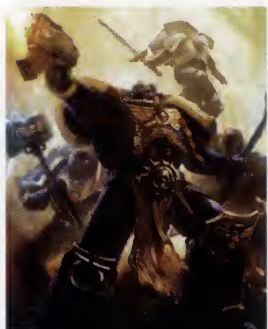
around the place. When the action is kickstarted, *Homefront* becomes a robust looking near-future shooter, with all the trimmings you'd expect. The Drama Engine was also discussed, which in layman's terms sounds like a 'cool shit magnet'. Anything crazy and exciting is thrown at the player for maximum entertainment.

The single most impressive part of the *Homefront* presentation, however, is how successfully Kaos seems to have fused real emotion with what's normally impersonal blasting. While the main character was pinned inside a house by some North Koreans, without warning the woman we spotted earlier strolling through the compound with her baby ran through the crossfire and into the house. Suddenly, the whole dynamic of the skirmish changed. We're now engaged in a viscous gun battle, and there's a baby crying in the background. A defenceless, innocent infant – screaming. The extra layer of intensity this adds, believe or not, is incredible. You can't ignore that primal human drive to protect the young, be it in a virtual environment or otherwise – that's an instinct you can't switch off.

So kudos Kaos – *Homefront* is a shooter that really hits hard. This *Frontlines* plus *Freedom Fighters* upstart looks like a true *Call of Duty*-level contender.

DARKSIDERS

We only caught a brief glimpse of this one, although we'll have a larger preview next month. It's a bigger game than we'd have thought though – apparently combining *God of War*-esque slashing with RPG length. Nice. Colons are out apparently, the 'Wrath of War' subtitle has been ditched.



WARHAMMER 40,000: SPACE MARINE

We're just not well versed enough in *Warhammer 40,000* lore to give you a blow-by-blow of the finer details of *Space Marine*. Simply put, *Space Marine* is a third-person shooter/slasher starring those tiny figurines you see sweaty guys painting in hobby stores. Looks violent. Probably has co-op, but Relic isn't talking about, that yet.

Fig. 1: A space marine



Features *MotorStorm*-style track deformation

MX VS. ATV REFLEX

The last one was a significant disappointment. It still handled fine, but it looked bloody ugly. We were getting worried all the talented bods at Rainbow Studios had left for 2XL Games, the crew behind the underrated *Baja*, but *Reflex* does seem like an improvement. *Reflex* features real-time track deformation and the ability to adjust your rider on the saddle – aiding cornering and sketchy landing recovery. It's a marginal visual step up too.



Homefront features a bunch of 'near-future' style tech, including this giant RC, six-wheeler



We're now engaged in a viscous gun battle, and there's a baby crying in the background... The extra layer of intensity this adds, believe it or not, is incredible



7 Spy hard or go home

SEGA

Another relatively modest showing, Sega chose to showcase three of its key titles behind-closed-doors and away from the clamour of the show floor.

ALPHA PROTOCOL

A somewhat up-and-down demo really. *Alpha Protocol*, for those who aren't aware, is a spy RPG. Completely amoral, there's no clear black or white in the world of *Alpha Protocol*. It was designed expressly to move away from notions of good or bad, and there are branching paths and multiple endings. It sounds great.

The demo itself, however, focused quite a bit on the combat – which honestly seems pretty workmanlike – rather than the really good stuff. We don't mind if the action itself is just a means to end to get to the meat, we just wish we'd seen more of the latter.

Obsidian has created a huge spy network in *Alpha Protocol*, with multiple agencies and characters that have their own agendas. Intel is essential and exists in the world of *Alpha Protocol* as dossiers, but as in real-life some of this information can be correct, and some can be incorrect. Consulting these dossiers will give

you hints on how to interact with people you meet and, if necessary, how to take them down. Additional dossiers are available on the black market.

Above all, your choices will effect everything. During the demo the protagonist was tasked with destroying a weapons shipment on a train bound for Moscow. You don't have to destroy it though – you could reroute it to someone else, or even yourself. This has the potential to effect your future relationships with people you haven't even met yet.

Conversations are completely dynamic too, and entirely within the hands off the player. You may choose to press for information from a character you meet by remaining professional and courteous. However, you may choose to get the information via a quick headslam. Your reputation will almost always precede you, so the way you behave in the present will alter the way people behave around you in the future.

Sounds deep, and we like that.



Predators will tear your head off. No, really – they will

ALIENS VS. PREDATOR

If Sega manages to get this game released in Australia intact, without 'modifications', we'll seriously consider eating our own hair. *Aliens vs. Predator* features the titular Alien and Predator races, along with humans, fighting it out for galactic supremacy. There's a campaign for each species, and Sega had two on show at E3. The human stuff seemed relatively standard – the level showcased saw the player fending off a series of Alien attacks using sentry guns and rag-tag crew of very expendable cohorts. The Predator stuff, however, is mental. Aside from leaping around, becoming invisible and all that other malarkey, you can tear people's heads off. You can see the terror in their eyes as you force their bonce to part ways with their torso. The spine comes out with it and everything. Then you keep it, as a trophy. Jesus.



EIDOS

There were a large number of other publishers, some without local representation, displaying their wares for the world at E3. Many of these games are brought down under by other distributors.

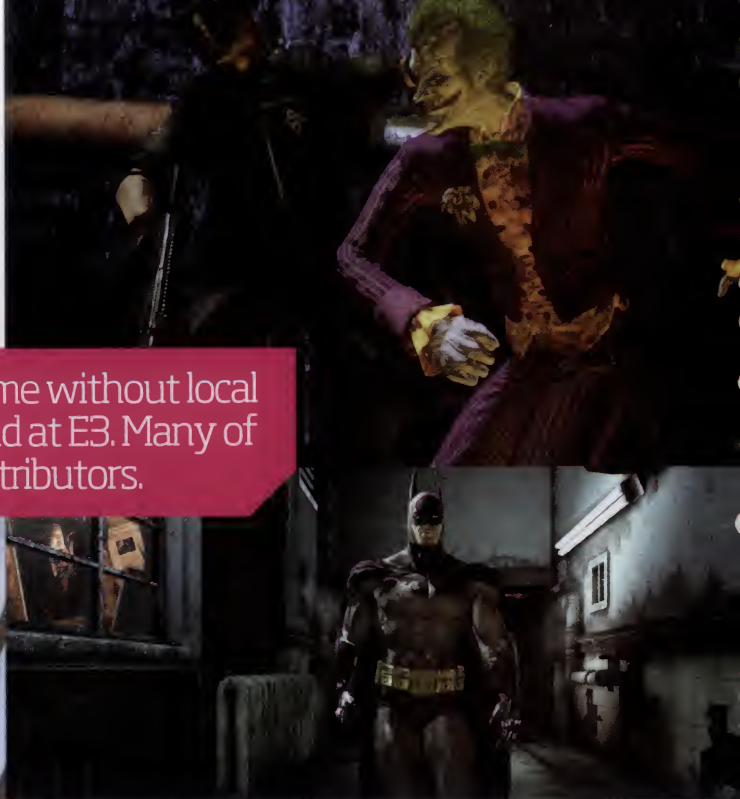


JUST CAUSE 2

Hugely impressive. By sprinting across the show floor we were able to manoeuvre our way into the very last demo of the show for *Just Cause 2*, and it was worth the run. The original *Just Cause* was a hugely ambitious open-world tropical action-fest. It was ugly as sin on PS2, but it was fun - and with a little more honing could've been something truly remarkable. Enter *Just Cause 2*.

Just Cause 2, for the record, is off the chain. The vast visual and audio improvements come as expected - it's a PS3 game after all. The number of tweaks to the in-game experience itself, however, leave the original looking positively ancient. The grappling hook from the first game has returned, but it's infinitely better. You can now grapple anything and it'll zip you straight to it - no fuss, and no frustrating detachments. We watched Rico zip back and forth across a military base, from guard towers to building to light posts. You can even grapple other item TO other items. You can attach a solidier to a truck and drag him behind it. You can attach a car to a chopper and use it as a makeshift wrecking ball. You can attach a speeding truck to a bridge pylon and tug it straight off the road.

If *Just Cause 2* isn't the only game around where you can leap from moving vehicle to moving vehicle, shoot the occupants while dangling over the bonnet, plant a C4 charge on the roof before popping your parachute and zip-lining your way to another victim we'll come around and eat this page out of your magazine.



BATMAN: ARKHAM ASYLUM

The PS3 version of *Batman: Arkham Asylum* features the exclusive ability to play as the Joker in a variety of challenge rooms. Playing as the Clown Prince of Crime is very different from playing as the Dark Knight. The Joker has access to poison gas and a pistol, and his crazy laughter makes for a distinctly unhinged experience. It's a nice coup for the PS3 version of this great looking game.

CODEMASTERS



COLIN MCRAE DIRT 2

We strolled up to the *DiRT 2* demo pods a few times between appointments. The first thing we noticed was that the handling has improved; the cars feel somewhat heavier. You still get the feeling the game's trying to make you look cool while cornering, but the powersliding is rad. The audio remains incredible too, as does the visual damage to the vehicles. We still hate the new attitude, but it feels good.

OPERATION FLASHPOINT: DRAGON RISING

Shaping up to be an extremely solid shooter, *Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising* is a make-no-apologies, realistic military FPS. It's come along since the last time we saw it, and we managed a quick hands-on as we passed by it. Working as a team is an idea that will be integral to the four-player co-op that's available throughout the main campaign.

MINI NINJAS

A cute, charming adventure title with vibrant visuals and cartoon ninjas from the makers of, wait, is this right? *Kane & Lynch: Dead Men* and the *Hitman* series? Yep, those crazy Danes at Io Interactive have been beavering away on this for some time. It's quite a change of pace from its usual fare - *Mini Ninjas* is a colourful platform/puzzler romp with multiple characters and a silly sense of humour. Not just for kids, either.

WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE



LEGO ROCK BAND

An all-ages version of the world's best music game, which we played on stage at the WB with a random 10-year-old. We're assuming his parents must be rich or famous, because E3 is a strictly 17+ event. The presentation is really quite cool, and Foo Fighters' 'Breakout' was a highlight. A mission mode will add depth, and fantasy levels will please little tackers.

MTV



INDEPTH

E3 2009



THE BEATLES: ROCK BAND

The setup of *The Beatles: Rock Band* looks and feels like a traditional *Rock Band* title, but there's more to it. For instance, it features three part harmonies with the use of two additional mics. It features incredible presentation that recreates the identity of The Beatles through a variety of different eras. It features unique replica instruments: a Beatles-branded Ludwig drum set with a black oyster shell finish, Gretsch Duojet and Rickenbacker guitars, plus a Hofner bass. Honestly, it looks and sounds fantastic.

We badgered the Harmonix rep on hand to find out whether *The Beatles: Rock Band* is coming out at the same time in Australia as the rest of the world and we were told yes. September 9, in fact. We also politely reminded him we don't have *Rock Band 2* yet and were told they're working on it. No comment on the Pearl Jam title.



ROCK BAND UNPLUGGED

"All we're asking you to do is drop trou and squeeze out a Cleveland Steamer on my chest." Poetry from Jack Black, in Tenacious D's 'Rock Your Socks'. 'Rock Your Socks' is one of 41 songs in the addictive PSP version of the class-leading rhythm series. The game's already available in the US, but we couldn't resist a quick go anyway. It's fun. *Frequency* fans, get on board.

DISNEY



SPLIT/SECOND

With *Gran Turismo 5* missing in action at this year's E3, and despite an admirable effort from the much-improved *Need for Speed SHIFT*, *Split/Second* is probably our pick for most impressive PS3 racing game. It's like *Burnout* and *FlatOut* meets *The Running Man*. The gimmick is you can alter the track in real-time, changing the dynamics of a race on the fly. Entire sections of tracks can be demolished right before your eyes. In the circuits on show you could do everything from half-sinking container ships to bringing down cargo jets for a wheels-up landing – on top of your opponents. It's thrilling, and crafted for maximum excitement. With the pedigree of critical darling *Pure* humming under the bonnet, *Split/Second* should be on every racing fan's agenda.

BETHESDA

BRINK

Brink is a shooter set in a world where drought, famine and rising oceans have killed of a large part of the world's population – and those who remain live in a floating city dubbed the Ark. Tensions eventually ignite between the security on the Ark and the Resistance, and players will experience the battle from both sides. You'll create characters for both sides across singleplayer, multiplayer and co-op.



WET

WET has style. It's a little finicky, and the action is a shade too schizophrenic, but we like its attitude. The film grain, the burning frames, the reel markers when you're near death, the fancy filters – it's total grindhouse. The biggest problem we noticed is that none of the wall-running or knee sliding shenanigans really feels that organic, so it seems shallow.



ROGUE WARRIOR

We want to love this game. It features an ex-SEAL with a killer beard. It's set in the '80s. Mickey Rourke does the voice work, and it's packed with one-liners. "Get dead f—kbag" is our favourite. It's every man's movie they stopped making in 1990. It's a bit underwhelming and basic though. Hopefully personality is enough to get it over the line.



PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: ARMADA OF THE DAMNED

Armada of the Damned is an action RPG that takes place around 15 years before the events of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* films. You'll begin as a young pirate setting out on his maiden voyage with the goal of becoming the most respected, or feared, pirate captain in the Caribbean. An open world title, you'll be able to explore towns, coves and the high seas on your quest.

LUCASARTS



STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS REPUBLIC HEROES

A pretty bog-standard looking *Star Wars* slasher/shooter hybrid. From our eyes-on it looked a shade like *LEGO Star Wars* without the LEGO. The guys seemed enthusiastic, but this probably isn't going to cut it for most gamers.

LEGO INDIANA JONES 2: THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES

The Indiana Jones saga, retold – with additional missions that weren't playable the first time around and the fourth film added. Depending on who you ask, that may not be ideal. You can build your own levels though.

STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT ELITE SQUADRON

An ambitious *Battlefront* instalment for the PSP. In this one you can start out footslogging on a planet's surface before nabbing an X-Wing, flying into space, boarding a star destroyer, fighting inside it. Seamless.

SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT



THE AGENCY

Still humming away, but unfortunately still no hands-on. *The Agency* is an MMO title for PS3 and PC that replaces typical MMO fare like dwarves and fairies with super-spies and martinis. At this stage PS3 and PC users can play together, but that may not make the final product.

DC UNIVERSE ONLINE

The other MMO from Sony Online Entertainment that isn't *The Agency*, *DC Universe Online* lets you create a hero or a villain and begin pulling off quests with DC characters to earn your way into the Justice League or the Legion of Doom.

SQUARE ENIX



DISSIDIA FINAL FANTASY

A wet dream for *Final Fantasy* fans – a fighting game featuring characters from the long and distinguished history of the *Final Fantasy* franchise. Seems pretty tough, but it's been going gangbusters in Japan. Should be a minor hit here.



FINAL FANTASY XIII

A tiny eyes-only only demo featuring new bloke Snow was all that was being shown at E3 this year, although it was revealed project development and localisation is about 60 percent complete and English voice recording has just begun.

KONAMI



SAW

A survival-horror game based on the *Saw* film series? A day late and buck short you might say. It's a bit stiff and it doesn't really seem that tense at this point, but we'll reserve judgement until we've played it in a slightly less hectic environment.

CASTLEVANIA: LORDS OF SHADOW

A *Castlevania* reboot with *Metal Gear Solid* granddaddy Hideo Kojima at the helm. This will be the first game in the franchise Kojima has worked on, although it's actually being developed by a studio called Mercurystream.



METAL GEAR SOLID: PEACE WALKER

Exclusive to PSP, *Peace Walker* – written, directed, and produced by Hideo Kojima – is set in Costa Rica 1974, 10 years after the events of *MGS3*. Big Boss is the main character and the trailer hints at co-op play.

METAL GEAR SOLID: RISING

The second of the *Metal Gear* double-shot, *Rising* will star Raiden, the much-maligned lead in *MGS2*. It seems the game will be more action-orientated. Kojima is only serving on this title as a producer.

CAPCOM



LOST PLANET 2

Larger scale battles (including one inside the colon of a large boss creature) and four-player online co-op for the whole campaign have us well and truly interested in staying on top of this title. There's a good buzz about this game.

DARK VOID

It's still looking quite brown and devoid of much personality, but the E3 build of *Dark Void* showed some improved flight controls – handy when your game's primarily about rocket-packs and such. It'll be tough for it to stand out.

DEAD RISING 2

We're close to certain that *Dead Rising 2* is the only game not to make a real appearance at E3 due to concerns over swine flu. We're not kidding. The world gets stupider every day, really. Everyone else went to E3, just a heads-up guys.

505 GAMES

IL-2 STURMOVIK: BIRDS OF PREY

Birds of Prey is super-detailed flight sim made for consoles based on the much-lauded PC series of the same name. Six campaigns, 50 missions, arcade and realistic settings, fantastic damage models – we'll be surprised if it isn't the best in its field.

NAMCO-BANDAI



TEKKEN 6

The new Scenario Campaign, revealed at E3, combines free-roaming brawling with *Tekken* combat. This can be played on your own with an AI teammate, or you can play with a friend – both offline and online. *Tekken 6* will feature the largest roster of any *Tekken* game ever.

DEAD TO RIGHTS: RETRIBUTION

E3 really didn't teach us much about this title, although we did get to feel it in action. Mauling bad guys as main pooch Shadow seemed cool – his doggie senses mean you can 'see' dudes through walls. The AI could do with work though.



SOULCALIBUR: BROKEN DESTINY

Basically a pocket-sized version of *Soulcalibur IV*, *Soulcalibur: Broken Destiny* contains many of the modes introduced in *SCIV* and over 20 characters – including a cameo by Kratos from *God of War*. Unfortunately Kratos wasn't playable at E3.

KATAMARI FOREVER

The latest version of the completely insane Japanese series is rolling closer and closer. Bigger and better than ever, there are even visual filters to alter the game's overall look. It's exclusive to PS3 as well. Put aside your reservations.

THE OPS E3 AWARDS

E3 2009 was one of the best shows in years so deciding on these awards was no easy task. After much reflection on the busiest three days of the year, and a little soul-searching, here are our picks.

BEST TRAILER

UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES

A successful trailer perfectly captures the attitude of the item it's advertising and should leave viewers absolutely stunned and/or suitably excited. The special mentions below each achieved this, but none better than our Game of the Show, *Uncharted 2*. Our time in front of the game itself confirmed its brilliance, but no trailer came close to summarising its game's greatness as this did.

Special Mentions

The Saboteur
Dragon Age: Origins
Gran Turismo 5
Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker
Assassin's Creed II
Dante's Inferno
The Last Guardian

GAME OF THE SHOW

UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES

The first we saw of *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves* at E3 2009 was during the Sony Press Conference. The game thoroughly amazed, despite the fact we'd sat directly in front of the noisiest guy in North America. *Uncharted 2* was presumably the first videogame he'd seen since 1989 (he spent the entire live demo shouting, "Oh my God!" every seven seconds. We spent the rest of the conference hoping a lighting rig would fall on him). We saw it again, up close and personal, two days later. Believe the hype – it's a blockbuster. If you can find a better action-adventure developer than Naughty Dog, you're lying.

Special Mentions

Modern Warfare 2
Homefront
Brütal Legend
Mafia II
Just Cause 2
Split/Second
Assassin's Creed II

The best of a great bunch

PlayStation
Official Magazine - Australia
E3 2009
GAME OF THE SHOW

BEST QUOTE

DAVID CAGE, QUANTIC DREAM

"Yeah, you want to get information, but maybe you don't want to get raped!" Quantic Dream's David Cage during his *Heavy Rain* demonstration. Yeah Dave, maybe. He said this minutes before stripping leading lady Madison Paige down to her bra and panties in front of a chubby, armed Scarface impersonator.

David Cage: what a wordslinger

BEST ANNOUNCEMENT

AGENT

It's arguably the announcement that was least elaborated upon, but it certainly can't be discounted. *Agent* is being developed by Rockstar North. For the window-lickers, the last game Rockstar North developed was *GTAIV*, and *GTAIV* was the most successful entertainment launch of all time. The fact that *Agent* is exclusive to PS3 is huge. It will be ace.

Special Mentions

Final Fantasy XIV Online
WRC and NASCAR to feature in *Gran Turismo 5*
PS Eye with new motion sensing controllers
Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker & *Metal Gear Solid: Rising*
PSP Go
The Last Guardian
ModNation Racers

AGENT

No details? Really?



Travis Barker is a legend

BEST PARTY ACTIVISION

Activision's opening night shindig for *DJ Hero* is a clear winner here. With all the *Guitar Hero* branding everywhere we were hoping for Van Halen, but instead we got live performances from DJ AM and Travis Barker, plus Jay-Z and a bored-looking Eminem – which was more than adequate. Spotted, that curly-haired bloke from Entourage, Matthew McConaughey, Dawn from Buffy and Pauly Shore. We also got a picture with regular Robert Rodriguez collaborator Danny Trejo, who seems like a righteous dude.

Putting Hollywood to shame



Flashy



It's the glasses

BEST MODEL

BAYONETTA

A clear victory for this lovely lass dressed as *Bayonetta*. It's either the glasses or the skintight leather suit, but either way she stopped us in our tracks. In fact, she was so hot they only trotted her out for a few hours a day, lest she trigger some kind of unstoppable saliva tsunami that would've washed most of the show floor out onto Figueroa Street.

BEST PUBLISHER

SONY

Sony's range of quality titles – *Uncharted 2*, *God of War III*, *Gran Turismo* for PSP, *Heavy Rain*, *MAG* and many more – proved just too hard to top. Some of the longest lines at the show were in this rather large booth. Fortunately we didn't have to wait in any of them. That said, EA was the pick of the third-parties with a huge range of gamer's games like *Dante's Inferno* and *Brütal Legend*, some truly accomplished sports titles like *FIFA 10* and *Fight Night Round 4*, the very surprising *Need for Speed SHIFT* and some cool announcements, like *Crysis 2* and *EA SPORTS MMA*.



ATARI



GHOSTBUSTERS™

— THE VIDEO GAME —

PG

Mild Themes



PlayStation®



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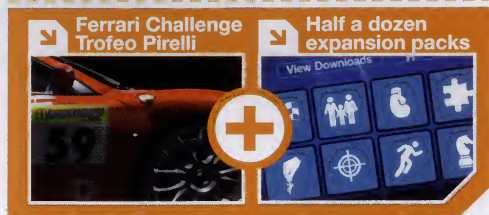
INCOMING

Exclusive looks at the very best



“The weather effects... coat the windscreen in translucent globules that buckle and pulse with your momentum”

IT'S LIKE...



PS3 GENRE: RACING | RELEASE: AUGUST 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: ALL INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT | DEVELOPER: EUTECHNYX

SUPERCAR CHALLENGE

Freedom in wheels

It is tempting to believe that with the consolidation of the games industry comes calcification, and certainty. That the anticipation of a new title can be matched to its ultimate importance, and foreseen as far in advance as Halley's Comet. This is not the case. With greater structural complexity comes greater risk, and randomness, and no-one can really keep track of it all. That's why *Ferrari Challenge Trofeo Pirelli* came as a surprise — it came out of nowhere. While everyone was poring over their calendars trying to guess when the next proper *Gran Turismo* was coming out, or how much of a humdrum disappointment the next *Need For Speed* would be, System 3 darted through the pack to deliver a perfectly decent racing game when we least expected it.

The story of the *Challenge* series is one of patience and excellence coming into

alignment. Look at the production history of Eutechnyx, and one sees a trail of tears; over a decade of toiling on games forgotten by history. *Max Power Racing*. *Street Racing Syndicate*. *Total Drivin'*. Some, like *Le Mans 24 Hours*, and its simulation of the event in real time, are unfairly ignored. Others, like *Big Mutha Truckers*, are unfairly remembered. All speak of frustration. This was a major development studio dedicated to making driving games, but to a man they'd rather be doing something else.

That something else arrived when System 3 founder, pinball machine collector and Ferrari enthusiast Mark Cale came to them with the concept for *Ferrari Challenge*. For a branded driving experience, no other marquee could compare. Nothing wrong with Porsche, per se, but those little runabouts are but stepping stones; the appeal of the Ferrari is both aspirational and universal. And iconic.

Every day you will see grown men who will never be able to afford a sports car in their lives parading about in branded caps and polo shirts, pledging their loyalty like Ferrari was not an Italian carmaker, but a warrior king. All hail Ferrari! All hail their awkward dashboards and minimal leg-room!

Eutechnyx rose to the challenge, creating one of the best racing games available on PS3 to date. And System 3, ever keen to maintain gamer interest, steadily released downloadable content packs to sate the needs of fans. We've seen the pictures. The hardcore never feel complete unless they're playing their driving games with a \$400 G25 wheel, while sitting in a cardboard box spray-painted red. Glorious!

But where to go from there? What trumps the aspirational? Simple: the impossible. Extremely limited edition, preposterously over-powered megacars

that few people will even see in their lifetimes, let alone drive. Cars that ram up against the very limits of automotive science. Cars so fast, so expensive, so ridiculously styled they throttle the imagination. Supercars.

If you've seen *Ferrari Challenge* running, you'll know what to expect: utterly gorgeous graphics. SC runs in full 1080p at a rock-solid 60 frames per second. The weather effects don't just send you all over the track, they also coat the windscreen in translucent globules that buckle and pulse with your momentum.

With this sequel System 3 has abandoned all pretence of producing alternate versions for DS, PS2, or even Wii. There just wouldn't be any point. Once you've seen it running, anything less looks like a load of arse.

And, oh, the cars... the 40-odd on the game disc will include the Lamborghini

This used to be the greatest car ever





54 SACRED II
OPS goes looting with Ascaron's very German fantasy-based hack 'n' slasher.



56 UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES
Multiplayer shoot out with Drake and co. Our first impressions of the beta.

Go on, race a lap like this. We dare you. 

PLAY YOUR WAY

Driving noob? Hard-core racing won't judge you. *SuperCar Challenge* won't judge you. There are three different driving modes to cater to your tastes and abilities, so that all players can feel at home. Perhaps you'll start out with the heavy ABS-assisted 'Assisted' mode, before working your way up to Arcade. For those who don't feel comfortable unless they're at the complete mercy of the elements, there's Simulation mode. Just be prepared to slip and slide like a knob of butter on a skillet...

"Hockenheim home!" 

Murcielago RGT, the Aston Martin DB9, the McLaren F1, the Ferrari FXX, and even that paragon of 'halo cars', the Bugatti Veyron EB. No formal announcements have been made as of yet, but it's safe to assume that DLC will add even more in the months and years ahead.

Admittedly, over half the vehicles included were pre-owned by *Ferrari Challenge* and its expansion packs (the F430 Spider, the 612 Scaglietti, the 599

GTB Fiorano, etcetera, etcetera), but even these retreads will benefit from the tuned-up AI and detailed graphics.


The clincher: it doesn't take itself too seriously. It doesn't take itself remotely seriously. The menu screens, that ones that feature the obligatory slow panning shots of assorted mansion driveway candies reflecting imaginary showroom lights off their multitudes of Gouraud-shaded polygons, are backed not by cheesy techno, or the lift music afterthoughts of your typical Japanese release, but by classical — by the Carmina Burana. Yes, that glorious, choral, operatic, high-culture multiple-orgasm that's normally only trotted out in the TV commercials of credit card companies when they're coming over all warm and mushy because they've sponsored the Olympic Games.

The cherry on the up-market, boutique

cupcake is the way

the game uses the SIXAXIS motion-sensing functions of the PS3 controller. Not for any mission critical tasks, and certainly not for controlling your cars. That would be fruity. No, it's a subliminal effect. If you, say, take a corner badly, get frustrated, and shake the controller while you're in the right viewing mode, you'll see the driver take his hand off the wheel and shake his fist. A little Easter Egg; the kind of graphical flourish you might not even notice if you weren't looking for it. It seems like such an obvious feature, in retrospect. But before *Ferrari Challenge*, no-one had even thought to do it.

So no, games development does not move like the cosmic clockwork of the heavens. For there are always new worlds


 Maserati, going stealth

to be discovered, usually right under your nose. We're excited about *SuperCar Challenge*. It's a game changer. It's a dark horse. It's good fun. And unlike GT5, it'll be out before you know it. Check it out — you know you want to. **James Cottey**


TOP VOICE-OVER

Lending harsh (but fair) criticism to your performance in the tutorial stages is a dynamic voice-over from Tiff Needell, former host of *Top Gear*. His harsh judgments sting more than anything the game itself can dish out: "If you don't like penalties, don't cut corners!"

WE SAY

 Improvements all round

 Champagne driving

 More of the same

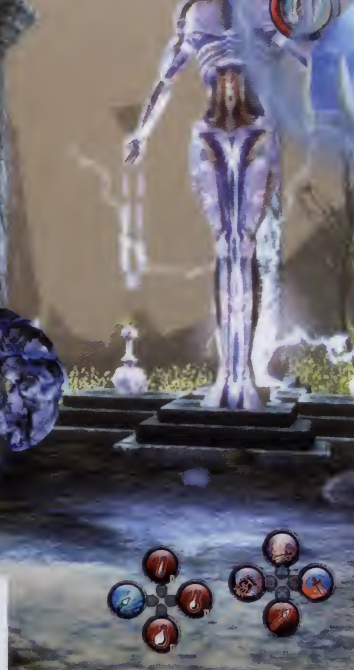
OPS IS...
Revving up



INCOMING

Sacred II

“...an utterly hilarious portal into the recesses of the mind of a typical German game designer”



IT'S LIKE...

Lord of the Rings

Star Trek



PS3 GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: JULY 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: FUNTASTIC | DEVELOPER: ASCARON

SACRED II

You got sci-fi on my fantasy!

We're in two minds about this one — *Sacred II* could go either way. Now that we've been spoilt by *Oblivion* and *Fallout 3*, it's tempting to write off any RPG from any studio other than Bethesda. Yet for all its shortcomings, our hands-on time with *Sacred II* led us to believe that this particular brand of top-down action could prove to be that most twisted of gaming delights: the guilty pleasure.

Sacred II is 'Rogue-like', a top-down RPG formed of grinding and exploration. We have yet to gauge its depth, but its complexity is immense. There are melees and ranged weapons, spells to heal, buff, and attack, and myriad upgrade paths to build on all of them. Items can be smithed and upgraded into other items, or smelted down and sold. Slain bodies disgorge gold, weapons, potions, and other valuable items (and wobble, and awkwardly roll downhill in an example of conspicuously unbalanced physics). There is no shortage of aggressors, either, for this sprawling fantasy kingdom is in the midst of a supernatural civil war. You'll pick up missions and plot fragments from NPCs, but you won't be turning to this game for

character development any more than you play chess for the story — the grinding is an end unto itself.

To play your part, and exterminate hundreds of villains and monsters, you must first decide on a character class. There are the Dryads, moistened bints in leather bikinis who are deeply in touch with... plants. There are the Shadow Warriors, undead fighting men who just want to get this whole conflict over with so they can return to the icy embrace of death. There are the Inquisitors, Elven monks in brown, burlap robes who wander the land dispensing justice on all lower forms of life (that is, anyone who is not an elf). You can play as an elf chick, if you wish, and parade about in a bright green tunic/bikini hybrid outfit that is both impractical and profoundly unattractive; quite the aesthetic double whammy. Yet the stand-out bizarre class are the Temple Guardians, dog-headed robots with glowing blue energy units in their chests.

These player character freaks have different combat modifiers and restricted options on whether they can play through the good or evil campaigns, but the one thing they all have in common is that they

are very, very badly dressed. Granted, you'll only be looking at the tops of their heads — and almost as if to acknowledge this, Ascaron only included customisation options for their hairstyle and colour (Fluoro green? Yes please!). But there is such a thing as phoning it in; it's difficult to imagine any oekaki fan art of this awkward troupe cropping up online.

The thing is, these off-putting, mannequin-like, neon-hued, '90s-cut-scene-looking character models are not deal-breakers. They're an utterly hilarious portal into the recesses of the mind of a typical German game designer. They're so bad, they're good. Viewed through this prism, we could not resist using a Seraphim on our first play-through. These holier-than-thou warrior maidens are supposedly righteous valkyries of divine justice on Earth, but they all look like prostitutes who buy their clothes at random from joke shops. Fetish mask, swim-suit, and high-heels? In a temperate steampunk fantasy setting? Sign us up!

Likewise, the voice acting is a riot. Good voice acting is unmistakable, and invaluable (*Prinny: Can I Really Be The Hero?*, on page 78, is a prime example).

Bad voice acting can also be an asset. The actors clearly haven't had time to rehearse their lines properly, since they're forever misjudging pace, when sentences end, that sort of thing. It sounds slipshod. It sounds amateurish. It sounds brilliant! Considering the game is packed with of fully-voiced conversations (on the occasions when folks aren't rushing directly towards you, trying to rub you out), the narrative has a *Plan 9 From Outer Space* vibe to it.

The game world follows the same brightly-coloured, neon aesthetic as the characters, and is the better for it. Verdant green fields, bubbling brooks, swaying forests, ancient temples, shrubbery, fountains, and other assorted idealised medieval trappings all make the vast, vast game world quite straightforward to explore. Likewise, handy arrows on the circular, rotating mini-map make tracking down the objectives in the arbitrary, errand-like quests a snap. In a game this big, the ability to save anywhere is an asset, too.

So where, if at all, does the whole setting diverge from *Diablo*, *LoTR*, and their ilk? Through some hybrid science/fantasy elements that border on steampunk. In the world of Ancaria, the energy source



MULTI-TRACK DRIFTING

Sacred II will support multi-player, over LAN or internet. This is your chance to cavort about in large *WoW*-style raiding parties, grinding away in happy unison as you bonk leather-clad grunts.



Ugliest

that makes all life possible is a goo called T-Energy, a sort glowing, magical ooze. Seeking to harness this power, the residents of this idyllic land ran pipes all over the landscape, pumping it about to supercharge their techno-medieval economy. Yet the pipes started to leak into the wilderness, this pollution leading to a rise in freakish mutations and monster attacks. With the dead rising from their graves to attack the living, civilisation collapsed.

In practical terms, this means *Sacred II* is like every other RPG out there, except its got robots and ray guns in it, too. It's pretty off putting, at first, when you realise that the ranged

attack of your sword wielding character is a blaster pistol that spurts plasmatic death. But after a while, you go with it.

If we're to take the decadence vibe to its logical conclusion, the biggest kick of all comes from *Sacred II* being foreign — the developer, Ascaron, is based in Germany. We all know the balance of the appeal from going into some trendy new ethnic restaurant and gobbling their spicy delights is not the food itself, but the occasion — the novelty value. In playing a game that's a bit like *Diablo*, but from a culture that's largely alien to us, all that was once staid becomes novel: the coding, the interface, the upgrade paths, the combat balance, the acceptable parameters of level design, the awkward camera angles inside dungeons... everything, really.

Thus the greatest potential of *Sacred II* is for it to transcend its novelty value,

Thanks Germany!



and actually make you think about all the gameplay conventions you take for granted.

Failing that, you can make a magic dominatrix romp around killing dogs. It's all good. **James Cottee**

WE SAY

- ↑ Huge game world
- ↑ Deep RPG system
- ↓ Looks silly as hell

OPS IS...
On the rack



INCOMING

Uncharted 2: Among Thieves

IT'S LIKE...

Indiana Jones



Skirmish



It's all a bit dark if you ask us. Can't they have a shootout at lunchtime?



Kill him, he's probably some 12-year-old punk from Utah



The grenade launcher: for people who throw like old ladies

PS3 GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: TBA 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY | DEVELOPER: NAUGHTY DOG

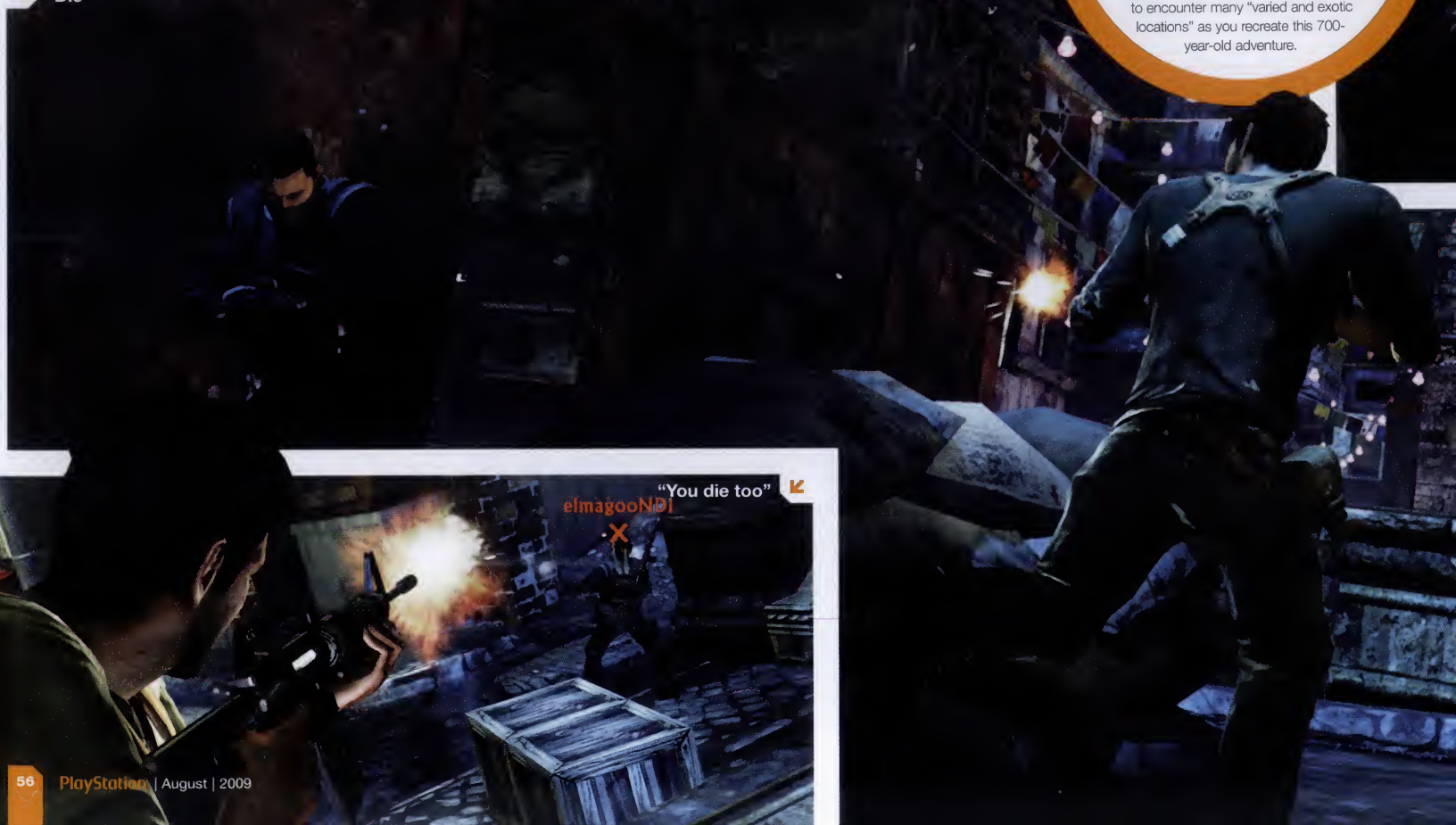
UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES

We're in your multiplayer beta, looking for treasure

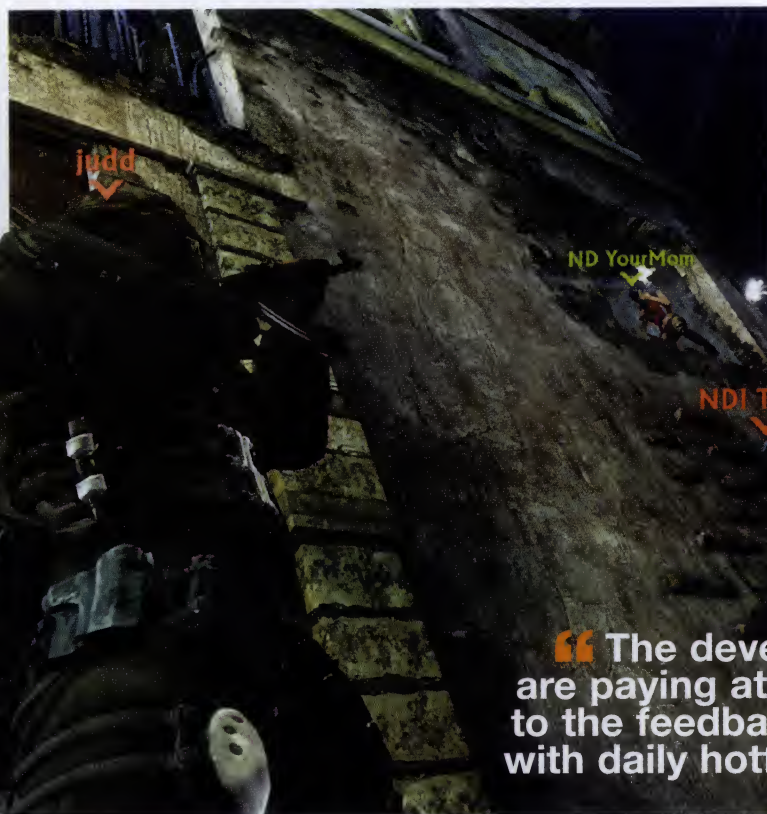
WHERE IN THE WORLD IS NATHAN DRAKE?

The single-player campaign sees us following in the footsteps of legendary explorer Marco Polo, who Nate believes found the mythical kingdom of Shangri-La and uncovered the location of the wish-fulfilling Cintamani Stone of Buddhist legend. Unsurprisingly, Nate wants a piece of the action. Setting out from China, Polo's expedition apparently ended with the discovery of the kingdom somewhere in the Himalayas. Expect to encounter many "varied and exotic locations" as you recreate this 700-year-old adventure.

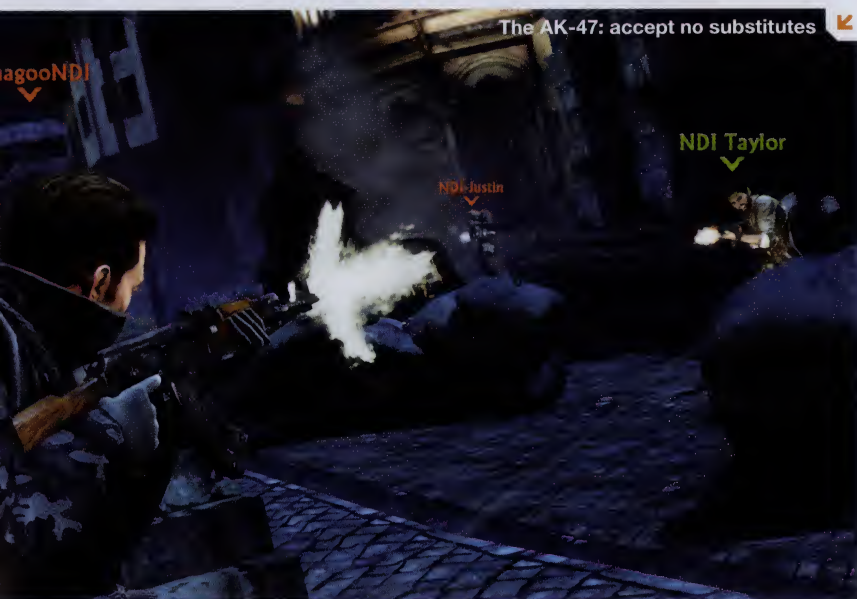
"Die"



"You die too"



“The developers are paying attention to the feedback too, with daily hotfixes”



The AK-47: accept no substitutes



WISH LIST

Things we'd like to see in the live version

HEADSHOTS

Killing suckers in one or two shots rather than three to four.

CLAN SUPPORT

Essential to any halfway-serious competitive MP game.

PROPER AK47

Works more like an SMG and is terrible at mid-range.

STAT TRACKING


Browsing through pages of headshot, kill/death and win/loss ratios really help pass the time while you're waiting for matchmaking to kick in.

NO FRIENDLY FIRE IN CO-OP

Waiting five minutes for a co-op game only to be teamed up with two wise-crackin' yankie tweens in the middle of a sugar rush is bad news. Cue death by grenade and spawn camping while they shriek half-baked trash talk at yo' sorry ass.

50 kills, which is generally about right but can drag on a little if you get lumped with a whole bunch of noobs. Unfortunately there doesn't seem to be any way of changing the kill count or anything else.


Competitive mode is very restricted in terms of choice. There are a couple of options in the player profile to pick 'boosters', bog standard upgrades that provide extra ammo or increase the accuracy of aimed rifle shots. It's also possible to pick a preferred character for heroes and villain teams but that's about it. There's no way to choose which map or game mode is played, and once a game is over everyone gets booted back to the matchmaking screen, which means another lengthy wait for a game to start. Wait times continue to come down as the beta progresses, but we're hoping Aussie players will get their own server on release as the matchmaking system seems particularly brutal in allocating games based on latency. We're also hoping that the current lack of choice and the annoying voting system are there for testing purposes and that we'll see more customisable games when things go live.

Co-op play isn't yet fully implemented, but what we've seen so far has been great fun. Two or three players can team up to achieve mission-based objectives against vicious enemy AI. The only map available is the Nepalese War Zone – basically a Nepalese town that's been bombed to buggery and is now home to some awesome treasure. Drake, Sully and Chloe are the chosen few for this mission, and there are certain hot-spots that require all three players to stand around holding the  button while a small cut-scene plays – generally involving the team giving each other a boost up to an out-of-reach hand hold or maneuvering some furniture to create a makeshift ladder. When it works it's great, but a couple of the three-person objectives fail if one of the party leaves the game, goes AFK or is the victim of a bugged-out respawn.

A ranking system is also present, and

each game scores XP and cash prizes. There are no rewards available as yet, but we're guessing there will be upgrades available for purchase as players progress through the ranks.

Given that we're only a few days into the month-long beta we're impressed with how solid the multiplayer is looking. Matchmaking issues aside, the net code seems really robust, and while latency is an issue it's not half as bad as some we've experienced. The developers are paying attention to the feedback too, with daily hotfixes to address player concerns. If this continues we should end up with a top notch MP experience to round off what is almost certain to be another classic single-player campaign.

Now, if you'll excuse us, we're off to polish off our treasure pouches and sharpen our pig-stickers. See you on the other side!  Alan Moore

Drake's Fortune was, or rather is, a firm favourite at OPS, so we have lofty hopes that the sequel will follow suit. The multiplayer side of *Uncharted 2* had us intrigued from the initial announcement so we jumped in to the recent multiplayer beta feet-first.

Currently there are only a couple of maps and game modes available for testing in competitive play. The Plaza is pretty much as you'd expect a plaza to look. Square. There are also lots of imposing buildings and tight alleyways and a couple of extremely nice sniping spots. The Village is like a busted old shantytown, with clotheslines strung across the streets and overturned garbage bins stinking up the place. There's a touch more 'verticality' to this map, with ladders leading up to some higher ground and more choice sniping spots. This map does feel a little on the small side, but we feel some players will probably thrive in the claustrophobic mayhem it induces.

Both maps have heaps of cover to play with, and mastery of the environment is essential – that moment of confusion while you execute a perfect forward roll and slide behind the remains of a wall can be just enough to teach the enemy a lesson in headshots – assuming you can fire off the four to five shots it currently takes to count as a headshot, that is.


The two game modes available for testing are Plunder and Deathmatch. Plunder is a simple reworking of Capture the Flag, requiring you to hump treasure around the map to collection points. A nice touch is the ability to hurl the loot to teammates once the opposition starts pumping you full of hot lead. We used the throw to put a bit of distance between us and the villains too, mainly by hoiking the treasure over a wall and doing some John Woo-inspired gun-ballet to take the pursuers down.

Deathmatch is standard team-based nuking. The game runs until one team hits

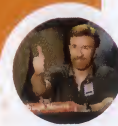
WE SAY

 Gatling gun

 Co-op is top fun

 Clunky matchmaking

OPS IS...
observing approvingly



10 REAL-LIFE HARD BASTARDS THAT MAKE KRATOS LOOK LIKE A PUSSY

Gaming has given us some truly tenacious tough guys, but not even the best of what games have to offer comes close to measuring up to these real-life hardcases.

Words: James Ellis & James Cottee

GRIGORI RASPUTIN

Rasputin was as a mystic that lived with Tsar Nicholas II in the early 20th Century and, by most historical accounts, a massive bullshit artist. Eventually this caught up with him and a group of Russian nobles set about doing him in. Soon after Rasputin had recovered from being stabbed and nearly gutted by a hooker he was brought cakes and red wine by these conspirators, laced with enough cyanide to *kill five men*. This didn't work, either because the poison had evaporated or Rasputin was *too hard*. So, concerned they wouldn't have enough time to hide the body if they waited, one of them shot Rasputin in the back. The killers decided to leave the palace for a while, but the shooter had forgot his coat and returned to grab one. To, presumably, his incredible surprise, Rasputin suddenly opened his eyes and lunged at him. While he was trying to strangle the guy that shot him, the other

conspirators burst in and shot him three more times in the back.

Keen to keep this party going and resume strangling, however, Rasputin began to stand again. The conspirators quickly clubbed him until he stopped moving, wrapped and tied him up in a sheet and chucked him into the mostly frozen Neva River.

Three days later, the body of Rasputin – poisoned, shot four times and badly beaten – was plucked from the Neva River. The autopsy found that he had indeed been poisoned, and that the poison alone should have been enough to kill him. But it didn't. Neither did the bullets, or the beating. He had drowned. If he'd been a faster swimmer it would've been payback time.

Hats off if those guys ever walked down a dark alley from that point on without their balls in their throat.

SIMO HÄYHÄ

Simo Häyhä was born in the municipality of Rautjärvi, near the present-day border of Finland and Russia. He did his one year of military service in 1925 and became a farmer and a hunter. He was such a good shot, in fact, that his farmhouse was reportedly full of marksman trophies for *being awesome*.

When the Soviet Union invaded his homeland in 1939 he figured his country needed him – so he made his way into the forest with his rifle and spent the whole time hiding and shooting Russians. At up to 40°C below zero. In deep snow.

When the Russians found out that one man was responsible for all the carnage they were copping in this dinky forest, they did two things. First, they gave him a name, the White Death (because of his white camouflage suit, and the fact he killed loads of people). The second thing they did was mount entire missions just to kill him.

None of these went well.

They began by sending out a task force to find Häyhä and take him out. This failed because he killed them all.

After that they cobbled together a team of counter-snipers and sent them into the forest to give Häyhä a taste of his own medicine. *He killed all of them too.*

Häyhä was eventually credited with 505 confirmed kills of Soviet soldiers (542 including unconfirmed deaths). But that's not all. Häyhä was also officially credited with over 200 kills with his submachine gun (which he busted out for anyone who got too close). That brings his credited kills to least 705. This was all accomplished in less than 100 days – in the short, five to six hour days of Finland in the winter.

He killed over one man for every daylight hour he was active. For 100 days.

Ultimately the Ruskies had really had a gutful, so they shelled the shit out of the whole area. Häyhä got some shrapnel in his coat as a result.

The shelling had failed too, but finally someone got lucky and shot him. In the head. Some other soldiers found him and returned him to base; "half his head was missing" according to one of them.

However, despite having a crushed jaw and a missing left cheek Häyhä woke up a week later and made a full recovery.

Oh yeah, and he lived until he was 97.

THE CLOSEST GAMING EVER GOT

The Sniper from *Team Fortress 2*, in *The Orange Box*.

Team Fortress 2's cheerful Aussie marksman is also a real menace with a sniper rifle, but Simo Häyhä didn't use a laser scope. In fact, he didn't use a scope at all.



THE CLOSEST GAMING EVER GOT

The Prince from *Prince of Persia*

The new one. You can't kill him, regardless of how much you try. He's also full of shit.

JACK CHURCHILL

An absolute testicle-munching nutter! This Pommy commando had balls that could derail a train, and quickly earned the monikers "Fighting Jack Churchill" and "Mad Jack". He was often seen running into battle dodging trench fire while playing fat war anthems on his bagpipes.

Get this. Rather than use standard military weapons, Mad Jack had his own medieval arsenal that consisted of a longbow, arrows, and a sword. During a battle in France he led his squad around to the flank of some dug-in Germans and ordered them to open fire on his signal. This signal happened to be killing a German with his bloody bow and arrow! To this day, he's the only WWII British soldier known to have murdered a man with such an ancient weapon.

That all pales in comparison to what he did in Salerno, 1943, which earned him the Distinguished Service Order. During

a night attack on Piegoletti, a small town gagging for takedown, he organised his troops into six columns and sent them charging through the pitch black shouting "Commando!" like a mob of chocolate-hyped 10-year-olds. The Jerries didn't know what direction to shoot in, and the operation net 136 prisoners.

Churchill was on the battlefield too, of course. In fact, he was so far in front of his men he and another squad member successfully made it all the way to the town of Piegoletti unnoticed. There Churchill conducted something he confessed later was "a bit Errol Flynn-ish." Using his sword – we'll repeat that – using HIS SWORD, he made like a silent-moustached ninja and captured all the soldiers in the sentry posts. Holding them all at sword point (!), he and his squad mate scored the surrender of 42 Germans – 10 of which were huddled around a mortar. Then he marched them out of the town. Job done. Did we mention

he just used A SWORD?

Years later, he was captured on two separate occasions and sent to prison camps. He escaped on both occasions, and on the second occasion walked 240 kilometres until he found some American infantry.

You'd think he'd cut his losses and go milk llamas or something, but no, he wanted more and was sent to fight in Burma.

But poor Mad Jack. By the time he reached India, Japan had been bombed and the war all but over. This proved a disappointment to this British bag of knuckles who felt the war could've gone on for another decade had the Americans not stuck their noses in. What. A. Psycho.

“He was often seen running into battle dodging trench fire while playing fat war anthems on his bagpipes”

Say India and the first batch of fizzle that pops into people's minds usually consists of clichéd crappola – butter chicken, elephants, men wearing dresses, cricket, blokes with moustaches and a part in their hair. But that's horse bollocks. Turns out India is a hotbed, not only for curry, but for bad arse mofos that could rip off Chuck Norris's balls and carve them into a bicep-shaped statue.

Yogendra Singh Yadav is one such cat. Back in July, 1999, he earned the highest military honour, the Param Vir Chakra, for pulling up the sort of hard-arsed antics one could only imagine if *The Bourne Identity* was smashed together with James Bond at twice the speed of light.

It all went down during the Kargil war when Pakistan and India were, as usual, turning each other into salami filler over the cruddy geographical rump hole known as Kashmir. The Pakistanis had been a bit cheeky and snatched some enviable real estate the Indians wanted for cheese and wine shows. Grenadier Yadav and his crew were sent in to mount a night time operation

to reclaim the area, which included taking back three perfectly placed bunkers on top of Tiger Hill. Thing about Tiger Hill, is that it isn't a rolling green lump of land that's home to topless Indian babes draped in pet tigers. It's a frozen mountain, sheer, blistering, and 16,500 feet up that's as inhabitable as the engine room of an industrial meat freezer.

Yadav, being trained in mountain climbing and arctic warfare, was charged with taking point and climbing up the frosty mountain first to lay support ropes. The rest of his posse would follow. Things were just peachy until Yadav got about halfway up the mountain. With his platoon commander in tow, the squad heard a series of sounds. It was a RPG firing on their position. Accompanied by hysteric machinegun fire from the first bunker, the attack killed the platoon commander and several other squad members. Yadav was shot three times, twice in the upper body and once next to his wedding tool. But rather than cry about it, Yadav blew a gasket and continued to climb the mountain, copping the occasional hot piece of lead. After he got to

the top he arm balled a grenade into the first bunker, killing all the Paki opposition.

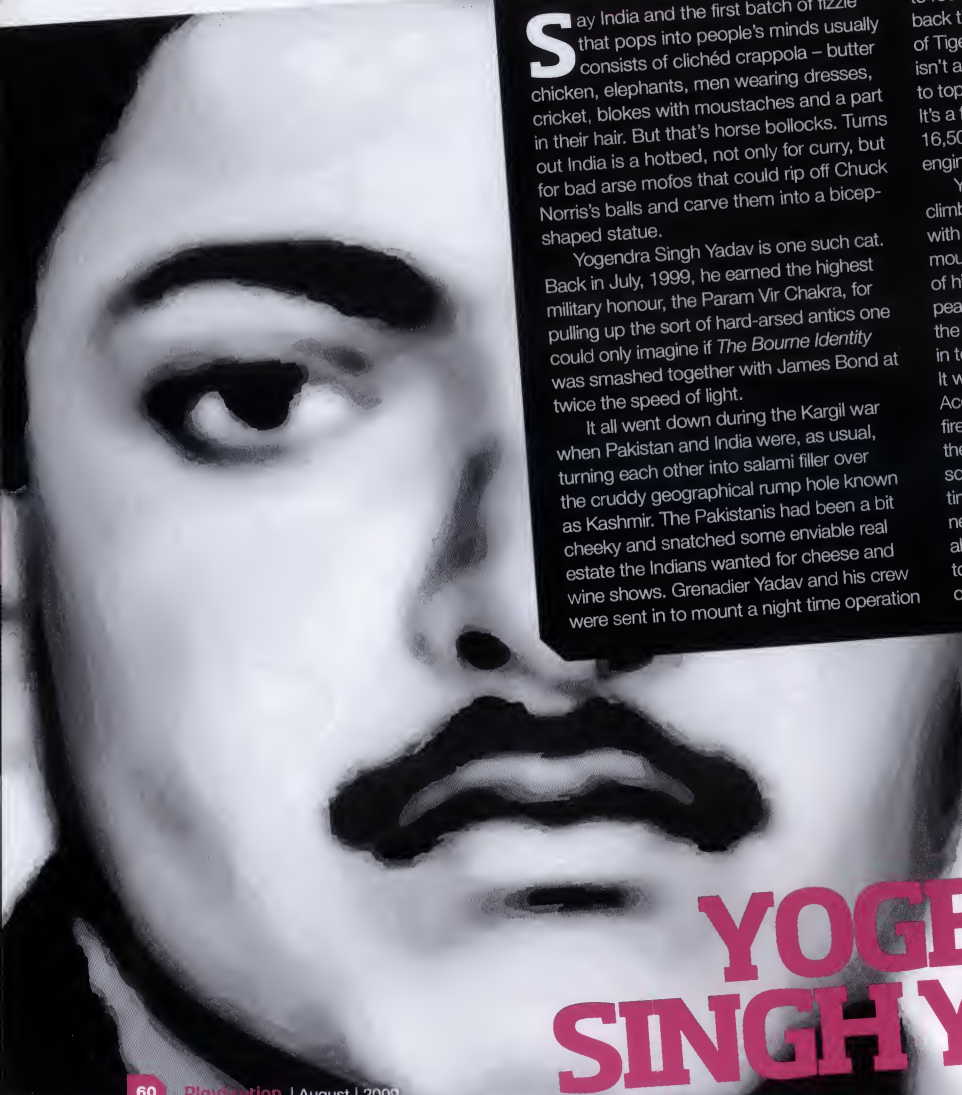
By this time two of his crew had reached the top of the mountain. Rather than letting these drafting pussies steal his glory, Yadav, pissing merlot like a punctured goon bag, charged on with his two comrades and took on three Pakistani soldiers in the second bunker with hand-to-hand combat out of a Genghis Kahn wet dream. Yadav suffered a broken arm and was peppered with gun shot wounds, but his ballsy plight galvanised the rest of his squad who ably took out the third and final bunker.

Yadav, of course, survived.

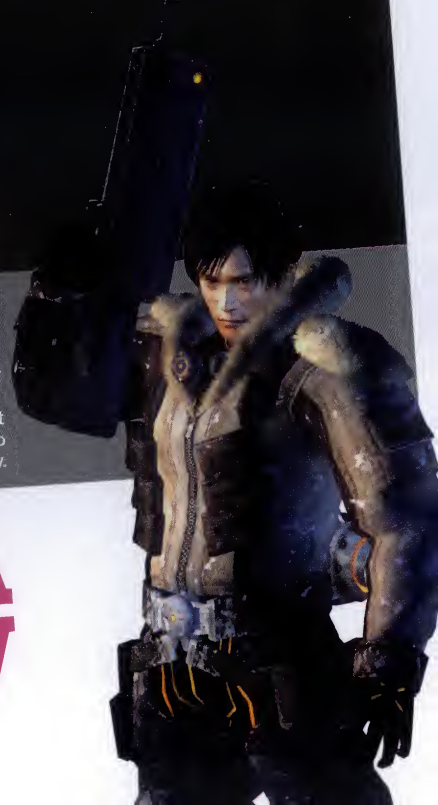
THE CLOSEST GAMING EVER GOT

Wayne Holden from *Lost Planet*

Sure, he has an awesome surname, but he still needs a hi-tech suit and mechs to battle on. Unlike Yadav.



YOGENDRA SINGH YADAV



ROY BENAVIDEZ

Talk about a steel-arsed bucket of balls. Roy Benavidez was a Special Forces soldier from the Vietnam War who performed one of history's most vivid guts-out displays.

It all happened back on May 2, 1968. A 12-man Special Forces Reconnaissance Team was inserted into dangerous scrub west of Loc Ninh, Vietnam, to snoop around and suss what sort of Bun Mang Vit the North Vietnamese were cooking up.

During the mission the lads met up with a hive of Charlies that started turning them into bacon bits with machinegun fire and grenades. The team called for emergency extraction and three choppers came to their rescue, but none could land due to fire from the ground. With huge damage to the choppers and a bunch of gutted crew, the rescue team slapped their balls behind their legs and retreated back to the base.

Just so happens Roy Benavidez was also at the base monitoring the fumble going down on the radio. While it sounded like the remaining team members were likely snake food, surrounded by a bazillion enemy troops, Benavidez received a thunderbolt of grunt from the action flick gods.

Crazy bastard volunteered to go back on a half-baked rescue attempt! Into a hive of bullets! When the chopper got to the extraction point Benavidez realised the missing squad were too wounded – or dead – to get to the chopper. He then ran 75 metres head-on into bullets towards the squad's location. On his way he was shot in the leg, face, AND HEAD. But he powered on, found the squad, and started dishing out fire fight directives to allow the chopper to get close enough. Despite having more holes in him than a hooker's tights, he carried half the team to the chopper. While he scooted off to fetch the dead body of the team leader, the accompanying pilot was shot dead mid-air, and the chopper crashed. Benavidez, who'd by now taken bullets to the guts and grenade shrapnel to the back, ran back to the downed chopper, dragged the survivors out, and made them form up into a defensive perimeter.

He then called in airstrikes until another chopper arrived. Then he ferried all the survivors to safety, at one point gunning down two sneaky enemies trying to flank the extraction point.

Eventually Benavidez and the rest of the squad were extracted out of dodge. For his trouble he'd scored a broken jaw and 37 bullet and bayonet puncture wounds. He miraculously survived.

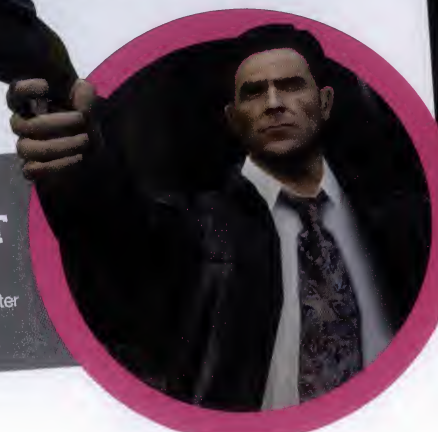
He was awarded the coveted Medal of Honor for his trouble and had a commemorative G.I. Joe released of him in 2001 – a bloody G.I. Joe!

“For his trouble he'd scored a broken jaw and 37 bullet and bayonet puncture wounds”

THE CLOSEST GAMING EVER GOT

Max Payne from *Max Payne*

He's likely the most shot gaming character of all time. But Benavidez never used painkillers.



INDEPTH

Hard Bastards

HANS-ULRICH RUDEL

Rude indeed. Old Hansy boy was another product of the German air-freak lineage that sprouted the Prussian phenomenon known as the Red Baron of World War I. Unlike the Baron, Rudel was a Stuka dive-bomber pilot who butt-smashed ground targets rather than airborne bogies.

Bloody Nazi bastard conducted – get this – 2,530 combat missions without buying the farm (yep, that's a world record). He maraudered trains, tanks – anything he could see from the air – and wound up destroying over 2,000 targets. The record shows those consisted of 800 vehicles, 519 tanks, 150 ground artillery guns, four armoured trains, A DESTROYER, TWO CRUISERS, and a SOVIET BATTLESHIP!

That's right, he sunk the Marat, a frikin' Soviet Battleship single-handedly. He pulled this feat out of his clacker in September 1941 with a single bomb to the bow. Admittedly it was a 1,000-kilogram bomb, but still. It's what the board game would call a direct hit.

An absolute menace to the Russians, it's suspected he also caused the death of Russian flying guru Lev Shestakov. In fact, he shot down nine planes. In a Stuka. That's like making the podium at Bathurst in a cement truck. After inflicting such colossal damage to the Russian ego, Stalin – a mega prick in his own right – put a 100,000-ruble bounty on him.

That's not to say he was never shot down – quite the contrary. Anti-aircraft fire knocked him out of the sky 32 times,

though the sly fox always managed to keep his arse alive and out of danger. After being brought down on one occasion he even managed to rescue six other sweet Nazi souls from allied territory. What a great bloke.

Near the end of the war in February 1945 he was shot down in a bad way and lost a leg below the knee, but that didn't stop him returning to service two months later and taking out another 26 tanks before Hitler buried a bullet in his own grey matter.

Rudel was the only Nazi tosspot to receive the Knight's Cross with Golden Oak Leaves, Swords and Diamonds. Whatever the hell that means. He was captured at the end of the war and eventually released whereupon he spent his remaining years hiding in Argentina.

THE CLOSEST GAMING EVER GOT

The guy in *Tom Clancy's HAWX* we're certain nobody remembers his name

David Crenshaw, apparently (didn't have a lot of personality, that game). Crenshaw has single-handedly sunk plenty of ships – but he does carry an absurdly unrealistic amount of hardware on one plane.



“Bloody Nazi bastard conducted – get this – 2,530 combat missions without buying the farm”

TOM DERRICK

One of the greatest Australian heroes of WWII, this unassuming, stocky larrikin performed some of the most astonishing acts of bravery in the entire war.

Born in 1914, Tom Derrick had it tough growing up, even by Depression standards — he often walked barefoot to school. By the time he left at age 14 he had already developed a keen interest in boxing, gambling, Aussie Rules, and mischief. During the depression he once survived for a week eating only grapes. Many gave into despair in this decade-long downturn, but Derrick never gave up, working nine years in a vineyard to help secure the nation's vital supplies of goon.

But it was in wartime that he realised his true potential. On 17 November 1940 Derrick set off for the Middle East with the 2nd/48th Battalion, and almost single-handedly made it the most decorated unit in the Australian Imperial Force — he was swiftly promoted to corporal in recognition of his aggressive patrols against the enemy. On 10-11 July 1942, at Tel el Eisa in Egypt, Derrick put it all on the line, charging through a barrage of grenades to destroy three machine gun nests and capture over 100 prisoners. Stewth.

When the Nazis counter-attacked, Derrick led the allied defence, single-handedly destroying two enemy battle tanks with sticky grenades. These ludicrous acts of bravery earned him the Distinguished Conduct Medal and

promotion to sergeant.

Later that year at El Alamein his battalion had been ground down to just 41 men, and despite being wounded he still managed to take out three more machine gun nests.

Amazingly, these incredible acts of bravery were just Derrick's warm-up act — he only really got going when the allies were re-taking Papua New Guinea. When his unit reached Sattelberg, they faced a cliff that was almost unclimbable in normal circumstances, which was now riddled with Japanese soldiers. 'Diver' Derrick ignored orders to withdraw, and instead scaled the cliff, taking out 10 machine-gun nests on the way up with little more than a sack of grenades and some covering fire from his mates.

This one-man invasion earned him the highest award for bravery an Aussie soldier can get: the Victoria Cross. His overall buffness also got him on the cover of *Australian Women's Weekly*, raising morale on the home front overnight.

Diver Derrick didn't live to see the end of the war, unfortunately. He was gunned down in Borneo while taking on (you guessed it) yet another machine-gun nest. But even after copping five high-caliber bullets, he was still able to direct his troops for half a day before he expired.

Not to be confused with Thomas Derrick, the Elizabethan-era hangman who executed over 3000 men, and whose innovations in gallows design introduced the word 'Derrick' into common use.

“But even after copping five high-caliber bullets, he was still able to direct his troops for half a day before he expired”

THE CLOSEST GAMING EVER GOT

Cole MacGrath from *inFamous*

Cole has a knack for taking out machine-gun nests, but unlike Diver Derrick, he cannot swim. Wuss.



AUDIE MURPHY

This one-man Rambo trilogy was just about the most highly-decorated American soldier of World War II. But you wouldn't know it to look at him — standing at only 5'5", he was knocked back from the Navy, the Marines, and the paratroopers for being too short and thin. At just 15 years, he was also too young — but with a forged birth certificate in hand he managed to get into the army. His 'superiors' wanted him to be a cook, but Murphy wanted combat — and he got it.

The story of his life reads like an action movie script that was rejected on the grounds of implausibility. When fighting through the south of France in '44, his best buddy was gunned down by a cowardly Nazi machine gun team that was pretending to surrender. Enraged, Murphy slew the murderous Krauts, seized their own machine gun, and used it to wipe out several other enemy positions. Thanks to video games, this Distinguished Service Cross-earning moment now seems like a bit of a cliché, but Murphy did it before it was cool.

But wait — there's more. In January '45, with the mercury at ten below zero, and his unit of 128 men whittled down to 19, a vastly numerically superior Nazi force attacked, including scores of infantry and six tanks. After ordering his men to the rear, probably by saying something like, "Stand back men, I'll handle this!", he manned the machine gun on a burning tank destroyer and started gunning down wave after wave of Nazis,

directing artillery fire against them the whole time. He held out for hours, killing over 50 Germans despite being wounded in the leg. Only when he eventually ran out of ammo did he withdraw back to his men, ignoring all medical attention so he could re-group them for a counter-attack. When Murphy was through, the Battle of Holtzwihr was won.

That staggering act of bravery won him the Congressional Medal of Honor. He earned 33 American medals in all, getting every single one available at least once — including three Purple Hearts. He also got five from France (including the Legion of Honor) and one from Belgium. Oh, and he contracted malaria almost as soon as he got to the European theatre. So to summarise, his height, weight, age, and the fact he was suffering from a debilitating disease for the entire war didn't stop him from slaying over 240 Krauts, and proving he was bravest man alive.

The war ended, but he didn't stop fighting. His Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (what they used to call 'Shell Shock') got him hooked on pain killers. Realising he was addicted, he simply checked in to a hotel for a week and went cold turkey. For the rest of his life he campaigned for returning servicemen to get the psychiatric help and respect they deserve.

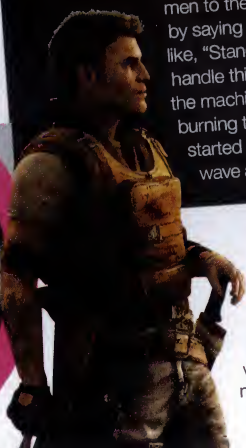
Later he got into acting. His dozens of films included the WWII flick *To Hell and Back*, in which — get this — he played himself.

America now has an annual patriotism award named after him, and his grave at Arlington National Cemetery is a tourist favourite, his final resting place second in popularity only to that of John F. Kennedy. His life story is proof that circumstances are nothing, but willpower is everything.

THE CLOSEST GAMING EVER GOT

The Protagonist from *Far Cry 2*

In *Far Cry 2*, you play a dude who's fighting a one-man war while suffering from malaria. The game also delves into the nihilistic philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche; a poor substitute for a positive attitude.



CARLOS HATHCOCK

United States Marine Corps super-sniper from the Vietnam War. He was so good at shooting commies that the North Vietnamese Army made him public enemy number one. Normally, bounties offered by the Chi-Com backed forces only ran to US\$8, which was of course a fortune in a society where you're not allowed to own anything. But the NVA put a gargantuan bounty of US\$30,000 on Hathcock's head. Despite being avowed Marxists, they could still appreciate the grim economics of the situation – left to his own devices, Carlos Hathcock could have won the war all by himself.

Such was his celebrity that his comrades were inspired to go out of their way to protect him, Spartacus style. Just like at the end of that movie, when all the slaves start calling out "I'm Spartacus!" "No, I'm Spartacus!", marines in Hathcock's unit started wearing white feathers in their hats, just like he did. Incredibly brave, considering that thirty grand bounty, but probably redundant – enemy snipers generally only eyeballed the 'White Feather' when it was too late.

A case in point: Carlos Hathcock actually shot an NVA sniper to death right through his scope. When you see that sort of thing happen in an action movie, one's automatic reaction is 'No way! The chances of that would be infinitesimally small!' But given that Hathcock was a living laser sight, that so many commie snipers were being sent to rub him out, and that the tell-tale reflection off his scope gave the other fella away, you could also make the case that such a wicked moment was inevitable. The kicker: the enemy sniper, sent explicitly on a mission to kill Hathcock, would have seen the White Feather zeroing in on him right before his demise.

We can only assume he cried a slow-motion "Noooooooooooooooo!" in Vietnamese as this *Enemy at the Gates*-style duel reached its macabre conclusion.

And it gets better. Hathcock wore that white feather for the entire war, save for one very special mission, in which he crawled, without sleep, for four days and three nights through enemy territory to assassinate an NVA commanding general. At one point he was almost stepped on by an NVA

soldier. His ability to lay perfectly still also saved him from a bamboo viper attack. And when he landed his one lethal shot, and slew the invader general, he wasn't fazed when the enemy forces went on full alert. He simply turned around and methodically crawled back to friendly lines. Champion.

Hathcock even customised his own gear, like he was one of the freakier characters out of *Metal Gear Solid*. His masterpiece was a M2 .50 cal machine gun which he'd modified for single shot fire with a scope of his own design. It was highly accurate, and lethal out to 2,500 yards. This invention enabled Hathcock to set the world sniping record with a kill at 2,286 kilometers, a record only recently (and only just) beaten by Rob Furlong, a Canadian sniper fighting the Taliban.

He won a Silver Star, too, though not for the sniping – he saved the lives of seven marines who were trapped in a burning amphibious tractor.

After the war, he led the Marines scout and sniper school, and from 1984 until his death in '99 he trained police snipers – at no charge to the taxpayer. Whatta guy.



“Left to his own devices, Carlos Hathcock could have won the war all by himself”

THE CLOSEST GAMING EVER GOT

Karl Fairburne from *Sniper Elite*



The bad-ass OSS star of Rebellion's cult hit WWII game could relate to Hathcock, seeing he was an American, disguised as a German, sniping at high-ranking fascists way, way behind enemy lines. If you track down this PS2 classic, be prepared to factor in wind direction, bullet drop, and even your heartbeat for every shot.

HERBERT K. PILILAAU



“He killed 40 enemy soldiers. That's as many as four tens. And that's AWESOME”

It's always the quiet ones. When the going got tough, this mild-mannered lad from Hawaii proved himself one of the greatest heroes of the Korean War.

By the way, don't feel guilty if you don't know much about that particular conflict – our lefty school teachers don't like to talk about it because they don't want to make the commies look like the bad guys. They were the bad guys, of course, sending wave after wave of brainwashed fanatics, slaughtering civilians huddled in churches, turning the Korean peninsula into a meat grinder. Nobody knows for certain how many young men the generals of Red China sacrificed in their bid to raise the red flag over South Korea, but estimates run as high as 1.5 million. Unable to match the numbers or insanity of the invaders, the multi-national UN forces protecting the south had to surpass them in gallantry instead. Every battle was pivotal, lest the allies be driven to the sea, and obliterated.

Private Pililaa distinguished himself at Heartbreak Ridge, a battleground that served as a microcosm for the conflict as a whole, where territory was constantly taken and lost; time and casualties the only measure of progress. Pililaa's unit was holding a key point of terrain when, in the process of gunning down wave after wave of commies, they eventually started to run

out of ammo. When they realised they had to retreat, Pililaa volunteered to stay behind and lay down covering fire so his buddies could escape. He knew exactly what he was doing. He made the survival of his friends his personal responsibility – even if that meant sacrificing himself.

But to paraphrase Patton, he made many, many commies die for their country before he returned the favour. As the reds charged, he mowed them down with his machine gun until he ran out of bullets. Then he hurled grenades, blasting even more aggressors into Chum. When he ran out of grenades, he closed in for some CQC, smashing the enemy with his trench knife and his fists before he finally succumbed.

When the allies retook the position, they got a shock – one of those authentic WTF?! moments. For scattered around Pililaa's body were the remains of over 40 enemy soldiers. He killed 40 enemy

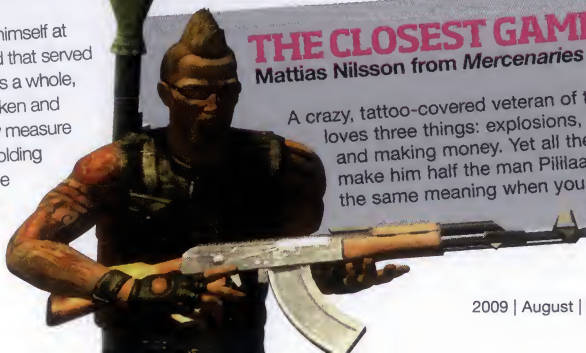
soldiers. That's as many as four tens. And that's AWESOME.

Pililaa was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, America's highest award for awesome. It's so awesome, it's always awarded in person by the President himself – in this case, it went to his family, who together with the whole of Hawaii are to this day humbled by his sacrifice and proud beyond measure.

One last thing: it's important to note that the Korean War didn't officially end on July 27, 1953 – there was only ever a cease-fire. The war ain't technically over, as Kim Jong Il reminded the world when he unilaterally withdrew from the armistice just the other week. Well, we don't care how lonely he is, the Dear Leader had better watch out. Because for all we know, Pililaa may not be technically dead. His living corpse may yet roam the Demilitarised Zone, hungering for the brains of tyrants...

THE CLOSEST GAMING EVER GOT

Mattias Nilsson from *Mercenaries*



A crazy, tattoo-covered veteran of the, er, Swedish Navy, Nilsson loves three things: explosions, killing North Korean soldiers, and making money. Yet all the facial hair in the world can't make him half the man Pililaa was, as death doesn't have the same meaning when you can just re-spawn a few seconds later.



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REVIEW RATING

PlayStation
GOLD AWARD

10 Incredible: Perfection is relative and elusive, and no game will ever be perfect. Our 10 doesn't mean a game is flawless, it means a game has done everything it set out to do in an amazing fashion and thus it deserves our highest possible praise.

PlayStation
SILVER AWARD

9 Excellent: An outstanding game, either limited by its scope, sequel status (and lack of improvement) or a few minor blemishes from being a 10. Likely one of the very best in its genre, a 9 comes with high praise.

PlayStation
BRONZE AWARD

8 Great: Still well ahead of the pack in most departments, despite a few issues here and there. Thoroughly recommended.

7 Good: A robust package that does a solid job despite a bunch of moderate problems. Enjoyable in parts, just not fantastic overall.

6 Decent: This game will have some noticeable flaws that may make it hard to recommend to those who aren't fans of the genre, but it will do more right than it does wrong. Just.

5 Mediocre: A conceded pass, if you know what we mean. Half okay, but half-busted. Might scrape by for fans, but few will want to play a game that half sucks.

4 Poor: Anything below 5, strictly speaking, is a fail – but there are degrees of 'bad' just as there are degrees of 'good'. A 4 is unrefined, partially broken and poorly designed.

3 Very disappointing: Things start to go very wrong here – fundamentally flawed in many ways, boring and close to pointless.

2 Terrible: Virtually nothing good here at all, and definitely not worth the effort of removing the wrapper.

1 The worst: Reserved for the very worst gaming could ever offer. A broken, offensive mess without a single redeeming quality.

“The character models are something else. Each muscle ripples and contorts with every jab, duck or block”

Fight Night Round 4

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in Blood

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Freedom Unite

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Be The Hero?

We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Bravia X-series for the best picture possible. This sucker melts eyeballs!



IN REVIEW

Fight Night Round 4



INFO

GENRE: SPORTS SIM
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: EA
DEVELOPER: EA CANADA
PLAYERS: 1-2
PRICE: \$109.95

FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 4

One ring to rule them all...



Our hands are strapped. The gloves are on. Boots laced, a hooded robe masks us from pretenders to the throne. They want our title. They ain't gonna get it. What they will get is a one-way ticket to pain courtesy of these lethal weapons right here. You think you're a contender? The queue forms to the left, get in line.

We'll take it that you're well familiar with *Fight Night Round 3* (well, you should be), and are up to speed with its pure unadulterated awesomeness. If not, it's boxing, you punch dudes in the face... got it? At any rate, we'll not waste your time and jump right into the shiny new Legacy mode, which

begins your journey with a question. Does one create a boxer, or walk in the shoes of a legend? Need a lean, mean fighting machine? A smorgasbord of customisation awaits, detailed down to muscle tone, weight, reach, even ring entrance nuances, whether grand and ostentatious or subdued and focused. More so than ever before, these characteristics make a significant difference to your overall experience.

If you're after your action up close and personal, then pimp out a stocky little nugget and focus on your inside game. Fan of the rope-a-dope, you say? Busting out a lankier bastard build with some height and

reach will help you stick and move as your jab your way to a TKO. Don't forget to have a squiz at the Signature punches, chock full of wind-ups, soft shoe shuffles, chin wagging and feints – all plays specifically designed to taunt and fake out, so you can smack the taste out your opponent's mouth.

ANY MAN WHO DREAMS OF HITTING ME BETTER WAKE UP AND APOLOGISE

After breezing through the Amateur Tournament to get your feet wet, it's time to mix it up with the big boys as you work to raise your legacy rating from "Burn" under-

under-under card status to I'm the "Greatest Of All Time" main event headliner, everyone-loves-me-so-get-off-my-jock superstardom. Training is the key. Cue up 'Eye of the Tiger', grab a side of beef and get tenderising. Spacing out fights to maximise your exercise routine, whether it's working the floor to ceiling ball, dodging, heavy bag work or footwork, is vital, and has a two-pronged effect. It contributes to sculpting a better boxer by raising select stats and slightly dropping others (creating an interesting juggling match to get to the level you want to), and gets your fingers dancing on the controller so you're more at ease when the pressure's on. You can puss



I AM THE GREATEST

We have to get this off our chest. We love almost everything about *Fight Night Round 4*, EXCEPT for their teasers. Ali or Tyson? Were there some extenuating circumstances surrounding the polling that we don't get? The choice seems fairly simple. One is a man who stood up for what he believes, is possibly the greatest boxer of all time, had poise, grace, patience, heart, charisma, determination and a wondrous grasp of the English language. The other is a thug that noshes down bits of Holyfield's auditory apparatus for breakfast. The Fear of Zaire or Scarfer of Ear? Is there really any contest?



"Gonna fly now, flying high now, gonna fly, fly, fly..."

Close in, highly realistic boxing far exceeds what *FNR3* offered



out by auto training, instantly giving you half the max improvement, but that ain't gonna amount to jack inside the ring. Practise makes perfect after all, so man up.

As far as the controls go, they're sublime. They just make sense and it's a pleasure to play as the franchise always has been. Think of your right thumbstick as an old school watch face with an imaginary line splitting it in half vertically. 11 o'clock and 12 o'clock are your left and right jabs, hooks start at nine or three, rotating around to 12, and uppercuts drop down to eight or four, with the same rotation as hooks. It's just as it was, but far more realistic this time around.

MAMA SAID KNOCK YOU OUT

Stepping into the ring is quite the daunting prospect now. This is a much more technical manner of beast and, though it loses some of it's Neanderthal grunt by neutering the jaw shattering haymaker (softening the blow literally and visually), it makes up for it in so many other ways. The character models are something else. Each muscle ripples and contorts with every jab, duck or block. Punches don't simply clip right through or connect with perfect precision, there are now glancing blows. Mistime and you'll occasionally get tangled



Tyson will eat your kids

WORSE THAN
THE RUMBLE IN THE JUNGLE

BETTER THAN
UFC 2009 UNDISPUTED

Aussie fighter Billy Dib features, along with Anthony Mundine



up. Get popped in the mouth and your health goes down, leaving you ripe for a KO, and body shots decrease your stamina, which will hurt you later on. It's a constant risk/reward trade-off with patient boxers ultimately coming out on top.

You'll need to be mindful of your stamina for the later rounds and resist the urge to callously throw punches (after our third match we twigged to the fact that we'd thrown twice as many punches as the guy in the other corner). You need to bide your time and wait for an opening to strike. Countering is extremely effective and a very potent addition to your arsenal if you get the rhythm down pat. Instead of nuzzling a block to your chest, use it in a more controlled, calculating fashion just before an approaching punch. Get it right and, as it's subtly brushed aside, you'll find yourself rewarded with a yawning chasm of man flesh, ripe for the pummelling. It's like chess. You need to be in it for the long haul.

We've been waiting a long time for a bit-o-fisticuffs, and we haven't been disappointed. It looks a treat, plays a treat, and you can beat the crap out of Anthony Mundine, and unless Kyle Sandilands or Uwe Boll decide to lace up their gloves, it

just doesn't get much better than that. **Dave Kozicki**

FINAL SAY:

- Runs like a dream
- Technical and strategic
- Ali bum-ba-ye!!!
- Slightly less intense

VERDICT:

It's hard to not pull the trigger sometimes, yet occasionally it pays off to pick your moment. That's what *FNR4* is all about

9

IN REVIEW

SBK-09: Superbike World Championship



5%

People in the office who know what SBK means

95%

People in the office who don't know what SBK means



SBK-09: SUPERBIKE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

It's not even a proper acronym, really



Get used to seeing a lot of man arse...

Somebody wise once told us that if God had meant for us to ride motorcycles he wouldn't have created Henry Ford. We're not entirely sure whether the theory is sound, but we find ourselves agreeing with the sentiment.

Still, it's tough to argue with bike aficionados because they all know the facts. They know they've got a far greater chance of ending up dead in a hedge than most other road users. They know they're crazy for swapping being surrounded on all four sides by steel and curtain airbags to being surrounded by nothing but the Earth's breathable atmosphere. You can wax intellectual with them about the virtues of cars all day, but they really don't care. Problem is, many of the world's coolest cats were motorbike nutters. Legendary actors James Dean and Steve McQueen, Elvis Presley, godfather of gonzo journalism

Hunter S. Thompson all loved straddling the steel horse. They're all dead, although motorcycles didn't kill any of them.

It's been about a year now since we played the last one, so we'd forgotten just how ball-bustingly tough the *SBK* series is. The franchise obviously has its fans, because they keep pumping them out. But is *SBK-09* worth its weight in gravy? That depends.

The menu system – although it initially appears quite nifty, set against bustling pit paddocks and obsessively clean garages – is rubbish. There's WAY too much farting about in career mode to get to the racing. Before each race of the championship you've got two free practice sessions, two qualifying sessions and a warm up session. This is fine for SBK diehards and motorbike tragic, and we imagine we'd probably go hard in the trousers over that kind of detail in a V8 Supercars game, but it's a real pain in the sack if you just want to get on with it. You need to time-skip through each lead-up event, sit through a cinematic loading screen and pump buttons while the game dicks around accessing and autosaving your profile. There's depth here – you can tool about with settings, text chat to your engineer and view race telemetry – but it will frustrate some.



INFO

GENRE: RACING
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: AIE
DEVELOPER: MILESTONE
PLAYERS: 1-8
PRICE: \$99.95



The racing itself, though, is good. *SBK-09* is nothing if not a rock-solid two-wheeled racer. Flick it to arcade and you'll fang about no troubles, switch to the hardcore modes and you'll find a deep and utterly unforgiving simulation. The crew at Milestone know their stuff – out of all the developers in the world these blokes are also in charge of the *MotoGP* series, so they're doing something right.

The weather effects punch well above their weight – rain-slicked tracks look pretty damn good and, combined with raindrops on the camera that migrate outwards at speed, are a great addition. Umbrella girls add authenticity to the overall presentation package. Visible damage and scuffing to bikes and riders' leathers is a nice touch. There's quite a bit for the dedicated.

The problem is it's probably not enough for the rest of us. We've played a few of these now, and while they're improving incrementally there really isn't that much spark. **Luke Reilly**

FINAL SAY:

• Technical and tough to master, certainly not shallow
• Umbrella girls

• Awful music, turn it off
• Niche and not much to it

VERDICT: SBK fans will likely have a lot of time for this title. Solid, but not for everyone.

6



PlayStation®
Network

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Violence and
coarse language

PLAYSTATION 3



PlayStation®Network



INFO

GENRE: SHOOTER
RELEASE: JULY
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: TECHLAND
PLAYERS: 1-12
PRICE: \$109.95

CALL OF JUAREZ: BOUND IN BLOOD

You gonna do somethin'? Or you just gonna stand there and bleed?

Westerns truly haven't seen their day in our industry. Sure, we've had smatterings over the years with *GUN* and *Red Dead Revolver*, but considering how many *GTA* clones and WWII shooters there are we're perplexed that Westerns, which naturally lend themselves to frenetic gunplay and historical tales of intrigue, haven't flooded the market. After the modest success of the original *Call of Juarez*, we're enthused to circle our wagons around this varmint and shoot the living snot out of it for a second time.

Following the current trend of sequels that are in fact prequels, we look back at our favourite gun-totting padre and brother combo, Ray and Thomas McCall, as they

run through the Civil War, desertion, escape, and, of course, eventually slipping into Mexico in search of revenge, lost gold and Coronas. As far as the genre goes, all facets are covered with careful attention to detail, diverse storylines and subtle nuances across the board.

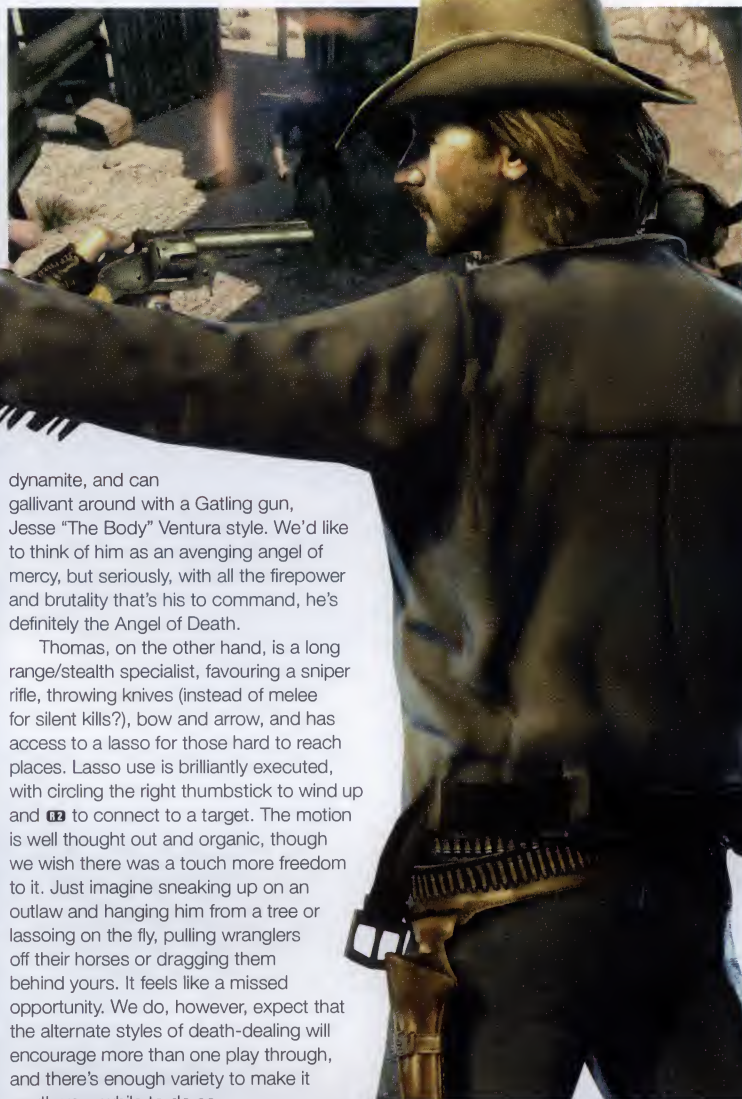
I'M IN MY PRIME

Each brother has tactical differences. Raymondo is the stronger of the two (we guess praying makes you less impervious to gun fire... heal me Jesus!). He can dual wield pistols, is deadly up close and personal, has a penchant for

“*Bound in Blood* has character oozing out the yin-yang”

YOU SKIN THAT SMOKEWAGON AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS!

Adding to the atmosphere are the showdowns that crop up every now and again. These moments play out with heart thumping intensity. The viewpoint switches to a “from the hip” shot, from torso down to your holstered pistol. Using the left thumbstick, you circle your opponent, vying for position, using the right thumbstick to edge closer to your peacekeeper. You continue to dance around each other until a bell sounds, signalling you to draw. It's immensely satisfying seeing your opponent bite the dust as you shoot the Stetson off his head, along with his scalp.



dynamite, and can gallivant around with a Gatling gun, Jesse "The Body" Ventura style. We'd like to think of him as an avenging angel of mercy, but seriously, with all the firepower and brutality that's his to command, he's definitely the Angel of Death.

Thomas, on the other hand, is a long range/stealth specialist, favouring a sniper rifle, throwing knives (instead of melee for silent kills?), bow and arrow, and has access to a lasso for those hard to reach places. Lasso use is brilliantly executed, with circling the right thumbstick to wind up and **LB** to connect to a target. The motion is well thought out and organic, though we wish there was a touch more freedom to it. Just imagine sneaking up on an outlaw and hanging him from a tree or lassoing on the fly, pulling wranglers off their horses or dragging them behind yours. It feels like a missed opportunity. We do, however, expect that the alternate styles of death-dealing will encourage more than one play through, and there's enough variety to make it worth your while to do so.



MAKE NO MISTAKE, IT'S NOT REVENGE HE'S AFTER. IT'S A RECKONIN'

After the Civil War equivalent of storming the beaches at Normandy opening, serving mainly as a tutorial of sorts (taking you through all the various time-specific weaponry and acclimatising you to the specifics of each brother – you know, the usual shenanigans: shooting from behind cover, manning Gatling guns, blowing up bridges and the like), they break out the big guns. You're asked to slow an impending advance of troops down river using your trusty cannon. Earlier code had this beast quite manageable, and whilst a hoot to shoot, lacked any realism. The review version is much sterner, and we really love it. The cannon had some serious weight to it,

and we found its firing action a lot closer to the mark. You round out the opening with a Gatling gun/cannon massacre, where you demolish a riverboat filled with enemy soldiers, and mop up survivors with semi-automatic fire. A gory good time was had by all.

I'M YOUR HUCKLEBERRY

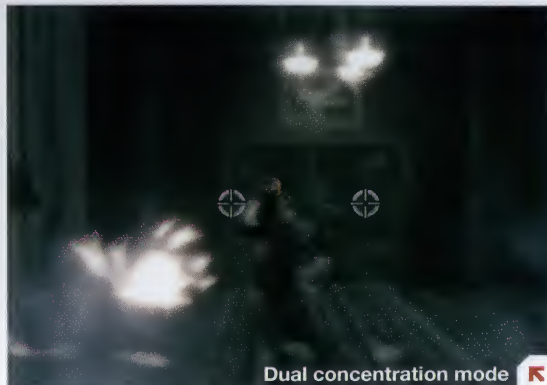
The coolest feature, by far, is concentration mode. When you rack up enough kills (one for each chamber in your six-shooter), you get a sixty second window of opportunity to unleash hell. By entering concentration the screen tinges black-and-white into classic slow-mo bullet time. Each brother has his own slant to it. Ray's is more of a quick draw, with the ability to target multiple enemies at once and let loose up to twelve shots, while Thomas' is more deliberate, with you pressing **LB** to fire on individual targets, and cocking back the hammer between rounds with a deft downward flick of the right thumbstick. It feels completely natural, and really reinforces the overall tone.

Once you're accustomed to the ins and out of it, you simply choose which brother to play as from the start of the level and get on with it. There's no co-op, which is odd (there are cooperative modes in multiplayer though) – but there are some truly memorable moments, like your first shootout at high noon. Horse mounted battles and even stagecoaches get a look in. *Bound In Blood* has character oozing out the yin-yang, from the accompanying melodies to each cut scene, the Ian McShane and James Garner-esque voice overs to the parchment styled comic panelling. Mount up! **Dave Kozicki**

That's a dangerous method of scratching your inner thigh



Not pictured: head turned into a canoe



FINAL SAY:

- Cinematic
- A blast to play

- Some clipping when in cover
- No melee?

VERDICT:

Despite some clipping issues, the plot's a winner and the gun-play has some very slick touches.

7

IN REVIEW

Overlord II



INFO

GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
DEVELOPER:
TRIUMPH STUDIOS
PLAYERS: 1-2
PRICE: \$109.95



Nice hat



PlayStation
Official Homebrew - Australia
**BRONZE
AWARD**

OVERLORD II

"How soft your fields so green,
can whisper tales of gore..."

Idealised depictions of the past are baloney. Everyone used to be poor, illiterate, malnourished, ignorant, superstitious, and hopeless alcoholics — and the further back you go, the worse it was. Tolkienesque fantasies of grand pre-histories where elves and pixies frolicked in verdant fields take this nostalgic deviance to the extreme; the fruity escapism of mush-headed inadequates.

Being the Overlord lets you indulge in a slightly different kind of escapism: one where you march through one such fantasy realm and bend it to your will. Or, for a change of pace on your second play-through, you can burn it to the ground. The path you choose will affect how your powers evolve (a la *inFamous*), but you are not compelled by any higher moral calling; the option has simply been thrown in for your own sick amusement.

For instance, when faced with non-combatants, you can press **Ⓢ** to zap them — a long zap disintegrates, whereas a short zap will brainwash. If it amuseth thee, thoust canst create a pack of drones to use as human shields for your force of minions. This is optional, but you can do it for kicks. Cheap thrills define the game experience.

As do your minions. Holding **Ⓢ** and the right stick sweeps them about your field of view, smashing crates in hard-to-reach places, destroying houses, gnawing at soldiers, terrorising civilians, and slaughtering the wildlife. Before long your pursuit of precious life force will have them clubbing baby seals, and wearing their hollowed-out heads as adorable trophies.

They'll nick anything: weapons, armour, and pointless accessories. In one sense, your army of brown, red, green, and blue goblin men are utterly expendable. Losing a few in battle is of no consequence, so long as you have enough left to reach the next auto-save point. Yet your individual minions don't just accumulate booty; they also level up. Thus the compulsion to periodically visit the spawning chambers deep beneath your fortress to revive them.

Yes, they can now ride mounts — and its just as well, since the standard enemies, the troops of the Glorious Empire, are tough nuts to crack. These pompous aggressors get significant attack bonuses while in formation, so you have to break their morale before you can break their heads. Snuffing their commanding officer will do it, as will setting a significant number of them on fire.

With enough momentum, a charging mob of wolf riders can break their ranks. The net result is that enemies are no longer cherries to be popped one by one, but mangos to be sliced, diced, and inverted, in a messy, but ultimately delicious experience.

Less straightforward are the puzzles, and the levels that hold them. Paths turn and twist, and arc in three dimensions to create the illusion of exploring real places, instead of just trudging a linear level. Likewise, upgrades to your armour, weapons, gear, minions, fortress, and harem are a compelling motivation to grind away at repetitive tasks. Don't get us wrong — it's still stacks of fun.

The atmosphere is phenomenal: dark yet quirky, familiar yet different, funny, yet mildly disturbing. The hub zone, the throne room of your subterranean fortress, grants a commanding view of vast and jagged caverns, where lava pools flow and minion minstrels play primitive jigs.

In this world the monsters are cute, and your minions are cutest of all; their huge grins and giddy antics almost always on screen. The 'good guys', naturally, are repellant. The pixie chicks that flutter about look like obese, gin-soaked trolls.

All the humans have terrible skin, and the elves sound like preachy Californian peace activists, man. The lackeys of the Glorious Empire make the stereotypes in *Asterix* look positively even-handed, with deviant legionaries led by bloated centurions, their faces covered in syphilitic sores.

You feel compelled to smash this world. It's just asking for it.

Yet a grasp of all the tactical possibilities at your fingertips is essential to advance. Acknowledging the complexity of the controls, Triumph chose to introduce them slowly, and methodically, with a deliberately shallow learning curve.

This is a substantial improvement over *Overlord*, but problems remain. While it is possible for the tactically astute player to control his minion hordes with squads and rally points, it is still a delicate, haphazard process. Even when you know precisely what you're doing, and exactly how to do it, there's still a strong chance some of your minions will end up in the wrong place at the wrong time, and subsequently end up dead. A slip of the controls is all it takes.

Sometimes the way to solve a given puzzle is clear, and sometimes it isn't. Some head scratching is unavoidable. Likewise,



GOTTA CATCH 'EM ALL!

Far from being generic, interchangeable little peons, your minions can actually show a fair amount of personality. Each has his own unique name, for starters: Dribble, Lard, Puke, Scroft, Scabies, etc. Each also has a title to match his achievements in the field of battle: 'Legion Basher', 'Hunter Hurter', et al. Pine not for the fallen; slain minions can be revived by sacrificing level 1 recruits.



➤ The new WWF mascot fails his first and final test



➤ Koo koo ka joob



WORSE THAN
ARMY OF DARKNESS

BETTER THAN
OVERLORD

the upgrade tree demands gold, souls, and crystals, and you'll need to do an awful lot of crate smashing to get them. Or at least, your minions will. A good leader knows how to delegate.

The defining moment came when, having spied a particularly rare class of collectible, we sent the Overlord in to smash the crate that held it. Before he could reach it, a little pointy-hat-wearing gnome, not even a foot high, darted in and nicked it, gibbering all the way back to its grubby little warren. Our clichéd expectations of fantasy gaming had been shattered. Sharing our pain was an innocent bystander, trapped from the waist down in another gnome nest. "My legs! They're eating my legs!" There's an Trophy for killing a thousand gnomes, and we'll definitely be shooting for that one.

Perhaps the most endearing aspect is the audio – wicked voice acting matched to haunting music. There are subtle variations on the main theme, plus folk and prog-rock hybrids that deeply embellish the mood of each overland realm. Or, you can turn off the sound and put on some Led Zep for the same effect.

Run, cowards. For we are your overlords. **James Cottee**



FINAL SAY:

- Refined gameplay, improved multi-player
- More jokes, gross-outs, satire, murder, and wenches
- Control quirks persist
- Obtuseness and challenge are not the same thing

VERDICT:
More of the slaving, sycophantic same. Yes, master!

8



PlayStation
Network

Download the free playable demo from
the PlayStation®Store from 22 May.*

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INSTALLATION ART

Loading times are reasonable, but you can trim them further by installing a huge chunk of game data to your memory card. Convenient!

MONSTER HUNTER FREEDOM UNITE

"Let me tell you of the days of high adventure!"

PlayStation®
Official Magazine - Australia
GOLD AWARD



INFO

GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
PLAYERS: 1-4
PRICE: \$69.95

Many games today are over in a mere 10 hours, yet spending that long on *Monster Hunter Freedom Unite* will barely scratch the surface. It is a simulation of staggering complexity and depth, and the deeper you go down the rabbit hole, the more rewarding the experience becomes.

It's not just a game – it's a world. A world custom-built to meet an aching need that our push-button lives cannot satisfy. Evolution made us hunter/gatherers, and in *Monster Hunter* you'll be doing an awful lot of both; your wits and your ingenuity will be pushed to beyond their limits.

Customisation is king. While you can only carry one weapon with you on a mission, there are 11 major classes of armaments to choose from. You can dual-wield blades like Kratos, or lug around a huge, lumbering great sword, long sword, or club. If you find the melee action a bit

much, then you might gravitate towards the calculating precision of the light or heavy bowguns; crossbows that can fire a variety of rounds that explode, paralyse, and so forth.

Wanna be a bard? Hunting Horns can heal and buff your comrades, so long as you know the right tune. Each weapon class has a knack to it; finding the right one for you is a quest in itself.

Armour is also crucial – you'll want to wear the best set you can get your hands on. Since supplies of finished goods are limited at the sleepy little mountain town you're based in, getting the best gear means crafting, and that means getting the right ingredients. See a conspicuous crack on a cavern wall? Bash it with a pickaxe, and some ore will be yours. Just slain a monster? Don't wait until its lifeless corpse vanishes – dash in and press circle to carve something off. Anything that looks unusual is probably a source of goodies.

Your reward is always random, but it all adds up. The indignity you suffer hunting rare insects with a butterfly net will be vindicated when you finally get the all the parts for that shiny new katana.

Leveling in *Monster Hunter* works a little differently to the norm. Your character doesn't have any skills per se, but the equipment he or she wears does. A matching set will compound such bonuses (cold resistance, heat resistance, luck, etc.), which only adds to the compulsion to obsessively collect shiny in-game items.

Other than that, the only skills you'll ramp up are the ones inside your head: attack patterns for the dozens and dozens of monster types, where given beasts like to roam on a given level, the location of that funny little man who'll trade goods in the middle of mission, on so on.

Once crafted, weapons and armour have their own upgrade paths, each

MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD

Whoever translated the thousands of pages of in-game tutorial and encyclopedia text was clearly having a blast — *Monster Hunter Freedom Unite* is full of gags plundered from the internet. Your weapons instructor advises that 'knowing is half the battle', and one of the major boss creatures is a 'Giant Enemy Crab.' Be sure to hit it for massive damage!



costing more money and ultra-rare parts. Many have slots that rare gems can be inserted into, adding further perks.

To be blunt, *Monster Hunter* feeds on obsession. Say you lean towards the heavy bowgun. That means you'll have to keep track of a plethora of ammo types. Since the most useful ones are the most expensive, to make your hunting cost effective you'll have to make your own shells. That means combining items, either to recipes found in expensive books, or via pure experimentation.

Oh, but it gets better. There's a limit on how much special ammo you can take out on quests, and some of the friskier wyverns will require more than your allotment to take down. That means gathering stacks of ingredients in the field — you have to catch fish before you can even think about slaying the dragon. So why do you do it? Because you are compelled. When *Monster Hunter* whips you, you'll ask for more.

It almost goes without saying that all these missions happen in hostile

environments. Even if a boar isn't trying to knock you off a cliff in the Snowy Mountains region, the frigid cold will sap your stamina bar. Run around in the desert during the day, and the blistering sun will sap your health bar. Potions can help, but you must be wary. Even if the land or its creatures aren't actively trying to kill you, then there's a good chance that evil kitty cats that walk on their hind legs will roll you for your loot.

Ah yes, the kitty cats. Living side-by-side with humans in this world are the Felyne — a race of intelligent, talking cats. They man the farm out the back of the hub zone, a place where you can mine, fish, gather bugs, and plant the seeds you find on your journeys. You can also hire a small workforce of these lazy, mischievous pussies. They can either work in your kitchen, where you can order up stat-boosting meals before important missions, or they can aid you in battle on solo quests, thus emulating the game's most glorious aspect: multiplayer.

Freedom Unite supports ad-hoc wireless play for up to four — this is an absolute blast. For the first couple of goes, you and your mates will probably squander a lot of time simply belting each other, and wandering off in random directions. But a few humiliating defeats will hone your instincts: "Right, men, that paintball we landed shows he's in Zone 7. If we split up and approach from Zones 6 and 8, we can execute a flawless pincer movement! Banzai!" For true catharsis, nothing beats bringing down a boss monster with your bros.

The graphics are utterly gorgeous, and the soundtrack is a wistful selection of haunting folk music. In a lot of ways, this game conjures up nostalgia for a time that never was; but this matters not. As the icy winter winds make us prisoners in our homes, *Monster Hunter Freedom Unite* gives us the chance to make our mark in a new and better world. This is a game that singlehandedly moves PSPs in Japan. Now we can see why. **A. James Cotte**

FINAL SAY:

- Stalk cunning beasts in a vast simulation of primeval wilderness
- Ultra-customisation — over 1000 different weapons and items
- Top sound and vision, and a wicked sense of humour
- Hundreds of hours of challenges, alone or with friends

A tad difficult

VERDICT:
PSP games do not get much bigger or better than this. Addictive, amazing. A triumph.

10

INREVIEW

Prinny: Can I Really Be The Hero?



INFO

FORMAT: PSP
GENRE: PLATFORM
RELEASE: JULY 2009
DISTRIBUTOR: AFA INTERACTIVE
DEVELOPER: NIPPON ICHI
PLAYERS: 1
PRICE: \$59.95



A tale of scarves and swords



PlayStation
Official Magazine - Australia
**BRONZE
AWARD**

WORSE THAN BEETLEJUICE
BETTER THAN TOMB RAIDER

PRINNY: CAN I REALLY BE THE HERO?

Everybody's heard – about the bird...



not out of courage, but out of fear: should they fail in their suicide mission, their mistress has promised a fate worse than death.

Even though they were all horrible people in their past lives, you can feel their pain. To ram home the fact these 'doods' are utterly expendable, the game gives you one thousand (1000) lives. On the one-hit-kill hard mode, you'll burn through them at quite a clip, and even on 'easy' you'll definitely need most of them.

Movement and attacks are straightforward, with a few tactical flourishes to be mastered. Holding down **○** will make your Prinny pirouette; this builds up momentum for a dash attack. Performing a dive attack in mid-air will break the 2D illusion, as time freezes and the game world rotates briefly for a moment of absurdist 3D bullet time.

The depth comes from the replay value. You can explore the six game worlds in any order, and they'll present you with different monsters and bosses depending on the time of day you visit. There are oodles and oodles of unlockables and secrets, plus the opportunity to save video of your run-throughs and share them via Ad-Hoc.

The Nippon Ichi crew are masters of turn-based strategy so there was no guarantee that they could do an action game, any more than Madonna was guaranteed any success in her acting career. But succeed they have; gamers can dive into their wicked anime universe with pick-up-and-play accessibility. This is the best platformer we've played in ages, dood. **James Cotte**

FINAL SAY:

- A visual treat, quirky and sublime
- Brilliant audio, voices, and sense of humour
- 2D ain't dead, dood

- Can't change trajectory mid-jump

VERDICT:
Immersive
and engaging:
a delightful
platform romp.

8

Do not pity the Prinnyes, for it is their rightful place to suffer. In the Underworld of the *Disgaea* universe, these peg-legged exploding penguin-men are the damned, the tormented souls of sinners. Prinnyes must work off their karmic debt by serving the demoness Etna, an abusive, mini-skirted tyrant who, as the game begins, is in a fit of rage because her favourite dessert treat has inexplicably vanished. She promptly sends her Prinny minions out to get another one.

Prinny is a spin-off of the *Disgaea* series, but prior knowledge of this rich universe is not essential to enjoy it; all you need is a sense of humour and a love of the macabre.

Evoking a vibe similar to *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, the lavishly painted, multi-parallax graphics evoke a dark fairy-tale netherworld. The music is from the Danny Elfman school of orchestral spooktaculars, and the voice acting is utterly brilliant. The high-pitched voices of the Prinnyes drip with desperation and dread – and every third word out of their mouths is 'dood'. They face a string of escalating platforming challenges

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PLAYSTATION 3



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INTERMISSION

On the screen

CINEMAS | **DIRECTOR:** MICHAEL MANN | **CAST:** JOHNNY DEPP, CHRISTIAN BALE, MARION COTILLARD | **IN CINEMAS:** JULY 30TH

PUBLIC ENEMIES (TBC)



The 1930s was a time when men wore their pants around their waist instead of their arse, liked their shoes shined and their banks robbed, usually by well-dressed, proper-pants wearing, shiny-shoe criminals. Enter John Dillinger, serial bank fleecer played with a ton of panache by Johnny Depp, and his nemesis in the Feds, Melvin Purvis, by Christian Bale. Dillinger's life reads like a story out of a movie – robbing banks, being caught, breaking out of jail by using a wooden gun, hiding from the FBI, robbing more banks, shootouts, chases – so we wonder why it's taken this long to be made.

Capping off the big names involved is

director Michael Mann, who did a stellar job with crime flicks *Heat* and *Collateral* amongst others, and is responsible for tying the action together. Mann's renowned for integrating the environment into the action, so we're especially hopeful that Dillinger's standoff with the FBI at Little Bohemia Lodge is as tight as *Heat*'s showdown in the street.

ALSO IN CINEMAS...

Bruno (TBC)

Director: Larry Charles

Cast: Sacha Baron Cohen, Richard Bey, Ron Paul

Back on the screens after a three-year hiatus comes another Baron Cohen alter-ego, Bruno, a gay Austrian fashionista. Baron Cohen's pre-movie hype is well underway after flashing his backside at the MTV awards, courtesy of rapper Eminem. Should be fun.

Ice Age 3 (TBC)

Director: Carlos Saldanha

Cast: Ray Romano, Denis Leary, John Leguizamo

Look, surely you're familiar with the formula by now, so if you want to experience comedy through the misfortune of an animated squirrel/rat creature successfully burying/eating his nut/acorn, jump in.

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince (TBC)

Director: David Yates

Cast: Daniel Radcliffe, Rupert Grint, Emma Watson

The Potter movies are getting better and darker with each new iteration, and David Yates returns to direct. Despite the average age Potter fan being 30-something years old (says us), don't expect a sex scene.



THE BUZZ

What's really going on behind-the-scenes

If you were asked to name an action star with so much muscle there's sod-all room in the movie for plot, your answer, depending on which decade you were born, could be either Stallone, Sylvester or Statham. Jason Rejoice, inter-generational fist and explosion

fans! Stallone has written and will direct an all-action love-in starring himself, Statham, universal soldier Dolph Lundgren, martial artist Jet Li, UFC champ Randy Couture, wrestler Stone Cold Steve Austin, and *The Wrestler*'s Mickey Rourke amongst others. Even Arnold

Schwarzenegger and, rumour has it, Bruce Willis, have cameos. The only other legendary star not on this list? Van Damme. Personally offered a role by Stallone he decided to turn it down. If it's not the worst mistake ever made it's gotta be pretty close to.

BLU-RAY | **DIRECTOR:** IVAN REITMAN | **CAST:** BILL MURRAY, DAN AYKROYD, HAROLD RAMIS, ERNIE HUDSON, SIGOURNEY WEAVER

GHOSTBUSTERS (PG)

"We came, we saw, we kicked its ass!"

After headlining one of the most successful US Army recruitment films of all time, *Stripes*, how could Bill Murray and Harold Ramis follow it up? With probably the greatest conglomerate of funny men to ever hold a positron collider, that's how. Murray, Aykroyd and Ramis come together, in the finest roles of each of their careers. For those who haven't seen it (really?), *Ghostbusters* is a tale of

three down on their luck scientists, who, after some wild paranormal experiences, decide to band together, and capture and contain any spectral entities for a sensible and affordable price. Throw in a burgeoning romance, a hilarious sub plot with Rick Moranis, a two-hundred-foot marshmallow man and an Apocalypse, and you've just about got it covered.

Though the CGI is pretty dated by current standards, there's an irresistible

charm to *Ghostbusters*. Whether it's the funky theme song, sharp as nails script, the brilliant score that never ceases to bring a knowing smile to your face or the dynamite chemistry between all involved, it's just a timeless comedy classic. Even if you catch it on the boob tube, and it's about half way through, we dare you to try switching channels as you find yourself grinning from ear to ear as you revisit it. Who ya gonna call?



EXTRAS: ?

VERDICT:

It just doesn't get any better than this. A remarkable, stupendous, wondrous chuckle-fest for the ages, and all ages.

10



FERRIS BUELLER'S DAY OFF (PG)

Director: John Hughes

Cast: Matthew Broderick, Alan Ruck, Mia Sara, Jeffrey Jones

There's no denying the impact John Hughes had on the teen comedy. His works are revered, yet none as much as the antics of a smarmy little rapsallion by the name of Ferris.

EXTRAS: 6

VERDICT:
A pitch-perfect '80s romp. Classic.

10



FALLING DOWN (M)

Director: Joel Schumacher

Cast: Michael Douglas, Robert Duvall, Barbara Hershey

In this disturbing flick, everyman, William Foster, is pushed beyond his limits, and reacts to a seemingly world gone mad, answering with his own brand of violence and justice. The most trivial of triggers sets him off on a calculated rampage.

EXTRAS: 5

VERDICT:
Dark and brilliant, completely compelling.

8



BOLT (G)

Director: Chris Williams

Cast: John Travolta, Miley Cyrus, Malcolm McDowell

As far as animation goes nowadays, this is not bad at all. Bolt and his compadre, Penny, are stars of a TV series where Bolt is a super-powered pup battling against the maniacal Doctor Calico. Where the audience and cast know it's all smoke and mirrors, the director ensures Bolt maintains belief that it's all real, to get a more genuine response.

EXTRAS: 9

VERDICT:
Not quite in the Pixar league, but pretty good.

6



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Ghostbusters
The game, on PS3
It's also damn good.



INTERMISSION

On the box

DVD **DIRECTOR:** MABROUK EL MECHRI **CAST:** JEAN-CLAUDE VAN DAMME

JCVD (M)

From the moment the revised Gaumont opening hit the screen, depicting a silhouetted Van Damme taking the signature daisy from a young lad, via roundhouse to the face, we knew we were in for a treat – and we weren't let down. In the extended one-shot credit sequence we witness Van Damme judo chopping, stabbing, shooting and abusing all manner of enemy soldiers (some with picture perfect timing, others, laughably off cue), until a prop mishap ends the scene and he exclaims exasperated to the disinterested director "I'm 47 years old, I'm too old for this..."

Those of you walking in expecting a series of scissor kicks and beat downs will be sorely disappointed. The film delves a lot deeper than that. It exhibits an out of work struggling JCVD, with his on-screen dilemmas mirroring his real life. He has custody issues, is frank about his previous cocaine habit and it all comes to a head as he tries to

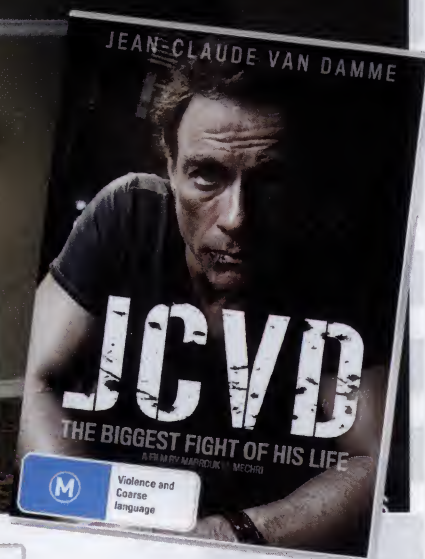
access a wire transfer at a post office, and it's held up. Police are trying to ascertain if he's a hostage or in league with the criminals. Various scenarios play out with Van Damme both hero and villain, and the final scene is an absolute scream.

EXTRAS: 6

VERDICT:

A surprisingly candid and honest offering from both the director and Van Damme, and with about 30% of the flick adlibbed. Maybe there's a bit more life left in the Muscles from Brussels.

9



BLEACH: MEMORIES OF NOBODY (M)

Director: Noriyuki Abe
Cast: Masakazu Morita

When mysterious souls come a knockin' and an even more mysterious new Soul Reaper, Senna, appears out of no-where and starts taking them out, who ya gonna call? Ichigo!

EXTRAS: 4

VERDICT:

Watch it in Japanese to get the true experience.

8



W. (M)

Director: Oliver Stone
Cast: Josh Brolin, Elizabeth Banks, James Cromwell, Richard Dreyfuss

For a man so fascinated with US presidents, this biographic recounting the life and presidency of George W. Bush lacks the punch of his past, more definitive efforts, surprisingly devoid of the muckraking and conspiracy theories we're used to. The performances, though, can't be faulted, with Brolin doing an admirable job.

EXTRAS: 6

VERDICT:

It's a long way from JFK, we'll tell you that!

6



DUPLICITY (M)

Director: Tony Gilroy
Cast: Clive Owen, Julia Roberts

Who's playing whom? That's the question they're asking you in *Duplicity*, a surprising decent delve into corporate espionage with Owen and Roberts playing spies for rival pharmaceutical companies, with both working a scam on the other. The problem is, the film tries to be too clever for its own good, often disengaging the viewer from the plot.

EXTRAS: 6

VERDICT:

A Julia Roberts film you can watch without spewing.

6




IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Bloodsport

It's considered Van Damme's best work.

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INTERNET

Gaming, trailers, downloads, friends...

LATEST

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Fight Night Round 4 demo



Get some training with the all-new control before the main round with this Hatton vs. Pacquiao three-round blif-off.

E3 footage



So you've played the disc on the front of the mag to death and want more? There's a metric crap-tonne of E3 footage here.

GHWT DLC



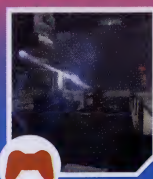
Pretend it's 1986 and you're in the *Transformers* animated movie. This one's a freebie, though the white denim jacket and mullet aren't included.

Final Fantasy VII



Considered to be one of the most definitive RPGs around, it's undeniably a PSone classic. Prepare to make 1.3GB of space.

Cellfactor Psychokinetic Wars - trial



This shooter with *Unreal Tournament* aesthetic packs some neat tricks into its trio of character classes. More like this, please.

NEWS

VIDZONE

Internet killed the video star

As we mentioned last month, VidZone is a free music video service that's launching across the globe, and Aussies are amongst the first to enjoy it. Plus, it's free from the PS3 PlayStation Store. The download is a reasonable 19MB, and once installed sits in the Music section of the XMB. Once you've launched the program pre-made playlists are immediately available (though at this stage there's too much Beyonce in there), but hopping to the Search function is dead easy and straightforward. You can search by artist or video, and there are a lot of popular, contemporary artists; think Foo Fighters, Calvin Harris, Mark Ronson, MGMT, even Billy Joel and Pearl Jam, though no Radiohead or Powderfinger. It's hardly comprehensive but the library can only get bigger.

After searching, videos can be added to a current playlist on the fly, and this can be saved as a favourite list for later. As you watch videos, the next one is pre-loaded though they can take a while to download and stream. Our tip: choose the videos you want, start the first one and pause for a few minutes. That, and get ADSL2+ with a large download quota.

Video quality is passable, as everything's a bit blocky around the edges, and all the videos we played had black bars at either the top or side of screen, or



both, with mini-ads that crop up every 15 seconds or so. Music quality is fine though. Ultimately, this is a truly flexible tool and the price is unbeatable. An option for better quality videos would be nice, and in the future videos can be downloaded to your mobile.

VERDICT

There's way more rich content on *RAGE*, but VidZone wouldn't be out of place in the background of any party.



MIDNIGHT CLUB LA PACK

Usually DLC involves the consumer getting bent over and raped by various distributors, with very little added to the gaming experience and a lot lifted from the wallet. The first South Central Vehicle Pack was a rape-free-zone. Adding a huge section to Los Angeles (free for all to access to the road itself, but if you want the challenges and races you gotta pay) and some fairly gangsta-licious rides to trick out your garage for about the price of a movie ticket.

Most of the cars were pretty ghetto-centric with a focus on lowriders and muscle cars. The second vehicle pack is all about keeping your pimp hand strong, featuring exotics and luxury cars. For the dosh you'd blow on a Hungry Jack's Stunner meal, you'll get the 2008 Cadillac XLR V (for style), the 2008 Lancer Evolution X

(for fast and furiousness), the 2007 Aston Martin DB9 (for Bond, James Bond) and the 2008 Ducati 1098 R (to wrap around a telephone pole).

All these move incredibly fast, and look the shit whilst doing it. Our picks to race are the DB9, 'cause how the hell can you go past it, and nothing says "slick all day" like a two-wheeled Ducati. If you already bought the first vehicle pack, you may feel gypped forking over cash for a few new burners, but if you've yet to visit South Central it's not a bad jump off point at all.

VERDICT

It's a shame this racer is passing under many a radar. Perhaps this DLC will encourage a little extra support.



ONLINE REVIEWS

BIONIC COMMANDO MULTIPLAYER

Invite your friends to a different kind of swinger's party



INFO

GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
PLAYERS: 1 - 10
PRICE: \$109.95

The slightly disappointing, albeit above average, next-gen makeover of *Bionic Commando* was not the tremendous game it should have been. Sporadically horrible level design, contrived blue clouds of radiation that kept you swinging in a distinctly linear path and load times that occurred all too often prevented the title from achieving the expected heights.

That was the single player campaign. Surely there could be some good times hiding in the multiplayer section. Right? Well, yes and no.

First up, there's a distinctly underwhelming number of players: 10.

In a gaming renaissance where we can have 32 players blasting the gibs off each other in *Killzone 2*, a lower-tech game offering a paltry 10 just seems piss weak.

Also, the game modes are as generic as an *Australian Idol* winner's first album. The "classic" (read "old") modes include Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch and, wait for it, Capture the Flag!

Yeah, these modes are ubiquitous in games these days but it's hardly going to make a gamer, any gamer, defoul their trousers with excitement.

The weapons aren't anything to write home about either. Unless you enjoy writing home about bland armaments. That being the case your letter would read: "Dear mum, the weapons available in *Bionic Commando* multiplayer include your handgun – a default weapon – a shotty, a sniper rifle, a heavy machine gun and a grenade launcher. Please tell Narelle to stay out of my room and make sure you record *The Ghost Whisperer*. Yes, I know Jennifer Love Hewitt has the acting talent of tofu,



WORSE THAN
INFAMOUS

BETTER THAN
TERMINATOR SALVATION

but she's got a cracking set of tits, eh? Love, your son xoxo."

Of course it's the bionic arm that will be your main weapon of choice and it, and it alone, makes the multiplayer experience worthwhile. In the main game you can use the Inspector Gadget-esque limb to swing off stuff, zip-line with great speed and attach it to enemies and then veer into them. Same with multi. As most of the weapons are clunky and hard to use, you'll probably find yourself using your arm: button mashing crazily, hoping you'll manage to 'arm crash' your foes

before they do the same to you.

The maps are usually large, taken straight from the single player mode, and though it's fun for a while, after missing your enemy for the sixteenth time or so you begin to yearn for the bullet blasting chaos of *Killzone 2* or *Call of Duty 4*, or really anything other than *Bionic Commando*.

We're going to score the multiplayer a tad lower than the game because it's not as fun. And seriously, if you can't make *Bionic Commando* multi fun you're doing something terribly, terribly wrong.

— Anthony O'Connor

RED VS. BLUE

Rather than have a variety of *Bionic Commando* skins you can be red... or blue. This does make it easy to see who is on your team but other than that it feels rushed and unfulfilling. Like fast forwarding a porno.



FINAL SAY:



- Big maps with lots to swing off
- It's good to see more than one *Bionic Commando*...



- ...although we'd liked to have seen more than 10!
- Weapons are hard to aim and your arm misses more than it hits

VERDICT:

The multiplayer component isn't bad, but it should have been great, and it isn't.

6



ONLINE REVIEWS

RED FACTION GUERRILLA ONLINE

Hammer on



INFO

GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
DEVELOPER: VOLITION
PLAYERS: 1-16
PRICE: \$109.95

When the hiding spot or wall you're hunkered down behind is literally blow away, the rest of the buildings and structures are being taken apart piece by piece, and vantage points and the gangways to them are being eradicated quicker than the polar ice caps, you have to be quick. Stop and start warfare doesn't equate to a long life on Mars, so near-continuous motion is best.

In Team Anarchy (Team Deathmatch, basically) running with a friend is a smart move, and not only for your own survival, as assisted kills net XP. In fact, the smart players can gain a staggering amount of points from just hanging around and helping out the team. As you improve and level up, an award, Pack Hunter, awards XP just for being close to a team-mate when they score a kill. We bagged this ability after a handful of matches, and it's fair to say *RFG* is an unlock-fest. It's rare that a match ends and you don't get something new, whether it's a badge, skin for a player, or type of hammer (yes, the ostrich is in there). We quickly unlocked Alex Mason and his brother. There are more to Red Faction members to acquire too, though some characters are more memorable than others. The amount of Red Faction skins available dwarves those available for the EDF, who could be mistaken for Faceless Oppressive Goon #1, Faceless Oppressive Goon #2, etc. Still, a team of Faceless Goons might be more terrifying than a quartet of Masons, which is just spooky.

Weapons from the game are all present in multi, though the substantial addition to the arsenal is the 10 available backpacks that are ability and performance modifiers, dotted around the levels. Some are fairly vanilla, standard abilities, though two are game and environment



changing: Jetpack and Rhino (see Packin' a Pack). Whether or not these two are the best option for dominating matches is irrelevant, as they're clearly the most fun. Jetpack is fairly self-explanatory, while Rhino is a charged dash that busts through buildings. It's also a sound way of avoiding damage whilst dashing and taking out an opponent. In the offline campaign, Alex Mason could sprint with a stab of **LB**; that button's now fixed to your backpack ability. The backpacks add another strategic layer to the game, and while the game has the potential to be a total maelstrom, it rarely is – even when everyone starts out with jetpacks and rocket launchers. There's loads going on in a game but it doesn't get silly. Teamwork is demanded, but not to the extent that has shooter junkies barking commands into their headsets – so don't be put off if you're without an earpiece. The



majority of modes are team based; a smart move on Volition's behalf, even if your team is often capped at four players a side. This limit keeps the world from dissolving into sheer chaos so we're not too bummed about it. Keep the sledge ready, you're gonna need it. **Paul Taylor**



PACKIN' A PACK

RFG's collection of weaponry is pretty ace, but the backpacks sprinkled around the battlefield in multiplayer add another strategic layer to the gameplay. Here they are, ranked from mild to spicy.

- HEAL:** Boost your health and that of your surrounding teammates.
- FLEETFOOT:** Increase your speed, Roadrunner-style.
- CONCUSSION:** Knock down nearby enemies.
- VISION:** Spot enemies, even through buildings.
- FIREPOWER:** Added zing to all weapons.
- TREMOR:** Raze buildings, good for disorientating foes.
- THRUST:** Like an express elevator, propel straight up or down.
- STEALTH:** Invisibility!
- RHINO:** Barrel through buildings and take a chunk out of a chump's health bar.
- JETPACK:** Fly around the level, raining death.

FINAL SAY:

- Frame rate never skips
- Excellent modes
- Usually a maximum of eight players on a map
- Spawn points can be a trek from supplies

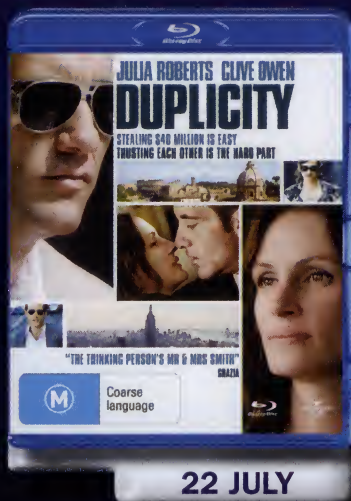
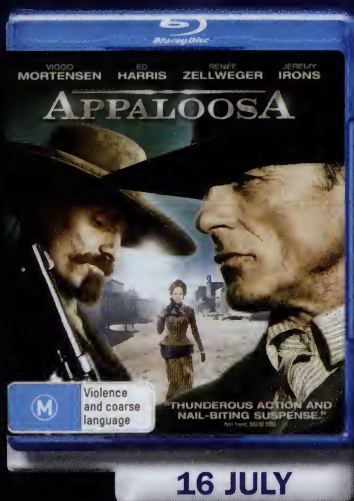
VERDICT:

An incredibly robust game with tons to unlock. It never stops giving.

9



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MONKEY BUSINESS IN RED FACTION: GUERRILLA

Things that make you go BOOM!

Red Faction: *Guerrilla* has become all the rage at OPS. With its large, open environment, a genuine sense of a dystopian Martian future and of course the trouser-stirring sexy explosions – it's hard to find anything to not like in the bundle of story missions, random courier/convoy missions and truck-loads of side missions.

These side missions are really the salad and potatoes of the game – with the story missions being the delicious, juicy chops.

In the side missions, you can destroy EDF structures, rescue miners, join in guerrilla actions, take vehicles to safe

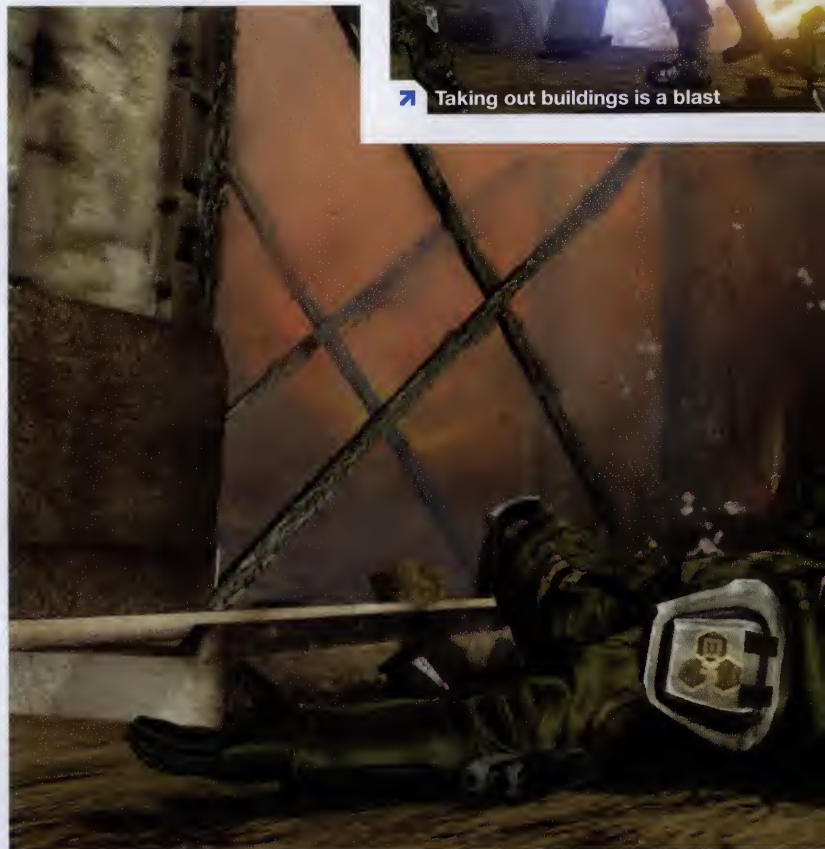
houses, ride shotgun with a crazy old coot, blowing stuff up and basically engage in all manner of exciting pursuits, and from the town of Dust onwards there are dozens of the bastards.

Now, you certainly don't have to do them all although doing a few extra ones for scrap is recommended, and once the story missions have been taken care of, many of these side missions are gone – or redundant time-trials – so make sure you do the ones that you find enjoyable.

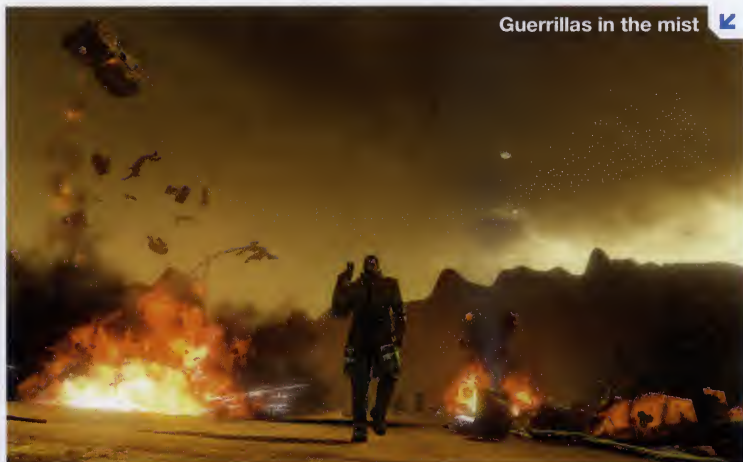
To find that out you'll need to work out just what kind of guerrilla you are.



➤ Taking out buildings is a blast



Guerrillas in the mist ➤



Using vehicles to demolish buildings saves valuable ammo ➤





The Arc Welder. Upgraded it packs a mighty punch



He's just dying to get off this planet

GORILLA GUERRILLA

You don't care about subtext, the script or even if you're wearing pants – you're all about making stuff explode. If that sounds like you, please put on some pants and use weapons like the remote charges, proximity mines and the rocket launcher.

When you upgrade make sure you can carry bulk remote charges, swap your girly-man machine gun for the rocket launcher and bulk up on proximity mines.

You'll likely want to be involved in taking out structures that are large and important. To do this you'll want to make a big entrance. Fanging off a hill or cliff in a vehicle covered in remote charges is a good start. As you slam into the structure you'll have the EDF all over you. Don't stay and shoot: bolt and detonate the remote charges. If you've landed in a load-bearing area chances are you'll take out the building. If not, throw your remaining remotes; concentrating on one side is an easy way to make buildings, smoke stacks and silos explode.

No doubt you've really given the EDF the shits so prepare a line of proximity mines to take out the ones who give chase.

If armoured cars join the mix, show them what a powered up rocket launcher can do. Said weapon can also be used to finish off buildings if you didn't bring enough remote charges.

Gorilla guerrillas will often die but, as the damage you cause stays, you're the kind of player who will shrug, rearm and get back into it.

DO

- Make sure you have loads of remote charges
- Max out the rocket launcher
- Place proximity mines in the areas the EDF will attack you

DON'T

- Take on missions where miners could be killed by your bloodlust
- Get wishy washy and try to upgrade all weapons equally – the ones that explode are your friend, all the rest are for girls
- Go straight to the story missions. You'll want plenty of salvage to kick up your explosive weapons a gear or 60

CINEMA GUERRILLA

You like the plot and you want to find out about the marauders, experience the narrative twists and turns and while you like the explosions – you're quite happy to do the minimum number of side missions to get to the next story mission.

If this is you – and it tends to be most players – you'll want to balance out your weapons and, more to the point, choose a variety of side missions as you get bored with repetition.

The good news is this is entirely possible. Do Heavy Metal missions to experience the joy of the mechs, and the variety thereof. Do a Guerrilla action, followed by blowing up a building of importance and then – for the sake of variety – rescue some fellow Red Factioneers.

Your weapon stash will probably be varied but not terribly strong. You'll want a long distance weapon like the assault rifle so you can take out EDF without endangering miners.

Also you might want to look into the Arc Welder or Grinder. The Arc Welder can be given a third strand of deadly electricity and, even better, focus only on enemies, leaving all NPCs and friendlies alone. The Grinder takes some finesse to use, but after being upgraded for speed and "explosive blades" it can really pack a punch. As you're only doing the minimum number of side missions you'll want to choose a favourite weapon and concentrate on it. We suggest the Arc Welder as it can fry the occupants of a vehicle – but you'll want to try a few before you commit to one mode of killing. You'll likely have a shorter experience than more committed players but the cool bits – seeing the EDF fighting marauders, Dust getting blown into, well, dust and attaining the jet pack, mechs and Nano tech – will all happen a lot sooner for you. The disadvantage is you'll have a harder time with later levels, but you can't stay playing games all day!

DO

- Side missions with high morale/salvage attached
- Try different weapons and focus on one
- A variety of side missions

DO NOT

- Waste salvage on bigger explosions
- Randomly get into fire-fights as there's little point
- Piss fart about exploring, get the side missions done and enjoy the story!



Taking cover is vital

THRILLER GUERRILLA

You've plonked out close to a hundred bucks, so you want to experience every possible nuance in the game. You want every EDF structure to be rubble as you leave the area – in short, you want to experience every thrill this top title has to offer.

So you'll be doing every single side mission. This will mean you'll probably have most of the upgrades and weapons by the time you're finishing up in the Badlands. You'll take on the same kind of side missions over and over, but why not try each one with a different strategy? Use the Nano rifle on one building, the rocket launcher on another and your heaving sack of remote detonators on another still.

You'll also be in the lofty position of being armoured to the hilt, well versed in the various backpacks, mechs and vehicles.

Expect to lose touch with your friends and family for a few months because if you tackle every mission – including random attacks on high, medium and low importance targets, plus courier and convoy missions – you'll be on Mars for a long, long time my friend.

DO

- Every single side mission
- Stop the car/truck every time you see one to mine or salvage to collect
- Everything!

DO NOT

- Take on story missions until you absolutely have to
- Let anyone else near the PS3
- Decide halfway through to stop and see the "outside". If you're determined to mine this sandbox stay the course!

Anthony O'Connor

10 THINGS TO DO IN... GHOSTBUSTERS

Bucking the usual trend, *Ghostbusters* is the most fun we've had with a film license since *The Warriors*. Here are few things we recommend trying for yourself!

1 "MOTHER PUS BUCKET!"

The very moment we discovered that our Proton Streams left scorched lines wherever they met a wall, our first instinct was, naturally, to write something rude on one. We eventually went with cock, mainly because it's a silly word that James May from *Top Gear* is always saying during prime time – but it's still technically cussing. We drew one too, but we won't print that.

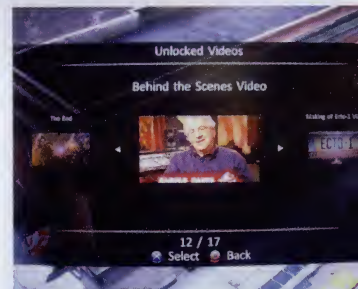


2 "TRY TO IMAGINE ALL LIFE AS YOU KNOW IT STOPPING INSTANTANEOUSLY AND EVERY MOLECULE IN YOUR BODY EXPLODING AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT."

Ghostbusters: The Video Game is pure fan porn. We said that last month, in the review. As such, if you COULDN'T cross the streams, in some capacity, generation Xers across the world would be dropping dead from rage-activated fanboy brain-bleeds. The good news for those susceptible to sudden aneurisms is, you can. If you stream meets with another you'll have a few seconds to disengage or you'll be knocked off your feet. Total protonic reversal. Do it.

3 "SUCK IN THE GUTS, GUYS, WE'RE THE GHOSTBUSTERS."

Check out the behind-the-scenes video and get a little insight into how this pretty ambitious and A-list heavy project came to be. It's interesting to see the guys now, at any rate. It's been 25 years since the original *Ghostbusters*; a lot has changed. They're a lot older. And wider. Except Ernie Hudson. He looks exactly the same. Watching the movies after this doco is like looking at old photos of your dad before you were born. Also, watch the Ecto-1 restoration video. It's rad too.



4 "YOU GOTTA TRY THIS POLE!"

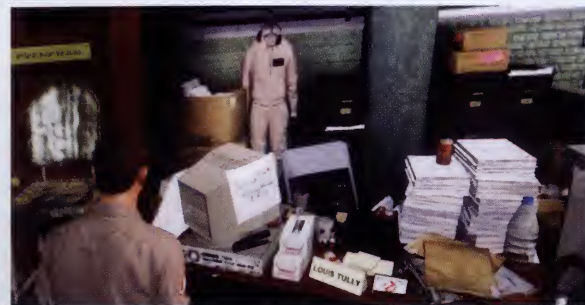
If you go down the stairs in the Ghostbusters firehouse rather than take the pole then, with all due respect, you're a moron. Remember Dan Aykroyd's enthusiastic praise for the pole as you mount it and slide down. Try to think of another place we could've ever written that sentence. You can't.



5 "VIGGY, VIGGY, VIGGY, YOU HAVE BEEN A BAD MONKEY!"

Make sure you talk to Vigo, he's a chatty bastard. It doesn't really make a lot of sense, having a talking painting of Vigo the Carpathian that talks to you just sitting against a wall at Ghostbusters HQ. One, the boys busted Vigo, so we don't know why he still has so much to say. Two, the painting changed into a portrait of the Ghostbusters clad in robes standing around baby Oscar. It's still cool though.





9 "TWENTY-FOUR HOURS A DAY, SEVEN DAYS A WEEK, NO JOB IS TOO BIG, NO FEE IS TOO BIG!"

Fully explore Ghostbusters HQ. There's so much detail there that we missed the first time around. For instance, near Ecto-1 – which is open and free to inspect – you'll find Louis Tully's desk, replete with a note hanging from his computer saying he's gone home sick, and his Ghostbusters jumpsuit hanging behind it (with his *Ghostbusters II* earmuffs, no less). Check out the employee-of-the-month chart (Venkman has won almost every month), find the ghost in the bathroom, reboot the containment grid – go nuts!

6 "WOW! TALK ABOUT TELEKINETIC ACTIVITY, LOOK AT THIS MESS!"

Don't miss the drawers flying out and spitting their contents into the air, just like in the original *Ghostbusters*. Run too fast and you'll miss it. In fact, don't run too fast through this game at all, especially in the library. Soak in the details.

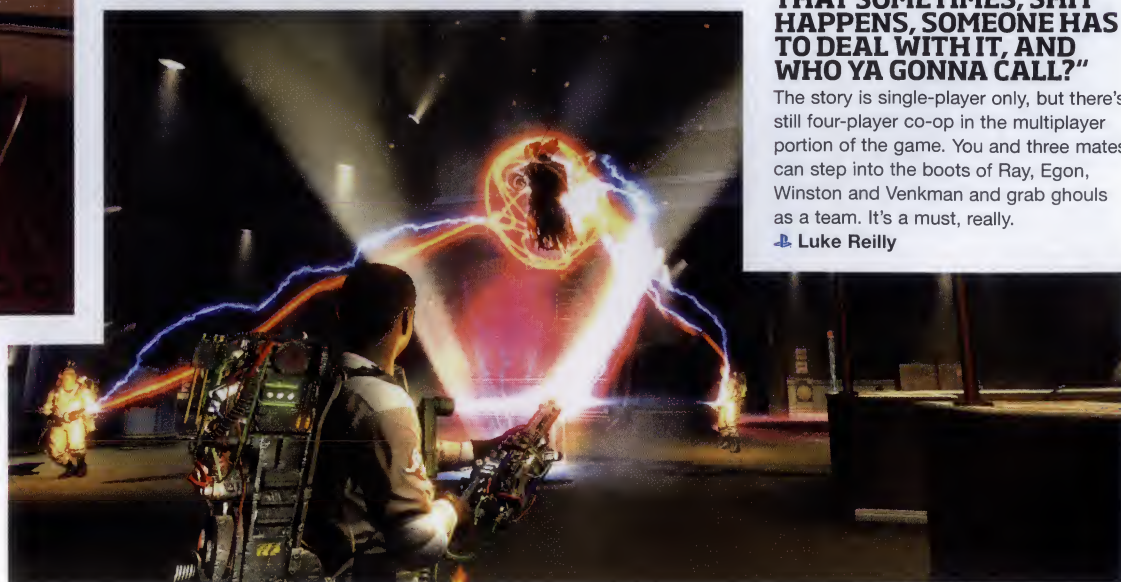
7 "WHY WORRY? EACH ONE OF US IS CARRYING AN UNLICENSED NUCLEAR ACCELERATOR ON HIS BACK."

Fully pimp out your Proton Pack. You'll receive the new Proton Pack modes as you progress, but you really must purchase the upgrades if you want to continue kicking undead arse. Max out your Proton Stream first, then your slime thrower. Trust us.



8 "AND THE FLOWERS ARE STILL STANDING!"

Remember the ballroom the Ghostbusters first caught Slimer in? You get to do it again. Take a little time out to check out the neat effect Terminal Reality tossed into the game for burning tablecloths. Woosh! Gone. In an instant. It looks cool, especially because it leaves the cutlery and table settings intact.



10 "KITTEN, I THINK WHAT I'M SAYING, IS THAT SOMETIMES, SHIT HAPPENS, SOMEONE HAS TO DEAL WITH IT, AND WHO YA GONNA CALL?"

The story is single-player only, but there's still four-player co-op in the multiplayer portion of the game. You and three mates can step into the boots of Ray, Egon, Winston and Venkman and grab ghouls as a team. It's a must, really.

— Luke Reilly

INDEX

All the games that matter on PS3!

WANTED

My precious...



THE SABOTEUR

It's time for a trip to Paris during WWII, where the player must bolster morale of Parisians who are justifiably naffed off at German occupation. There's talk of a 'WTF' factor, but they claim it's "Will to Fight!", not a ruder abbreviation. Whatever – if the game's as good as the artwork that's floating about then we'll be happy little PSmites!



BLUR

Yep, Damon's getting the band back together... er, what? Oh. *Blur* isn't a Britpop music game. Rather, it's a new starter on the ever burgeoning PS3 racing grid. We have to say it sounds pretty cool, using photorealistic car models combined with power-up action that has more than a hint of *Mario Kart* about it.



GUITAR HERO 5

Another year, another *Guitar Hero*. Sounding more like *World Tour* spat on and polished a bit, this one will offer a few new features to the full band experience, notably more freedom of instrument choice (want four drummers? Sure, if you have room) and new competitive modes. Most *GHW* DLC will work, too.



HOMEFRONT

Ever seen the 1984 flick *Red Dawn*? If so, you'll have an idea what to expect from this FPS, which has been penned by John Millius, the very scribe responsible for the Patrick Swayze-infused cinematic cult hit. In the game, the USA has been conquered by the North Koreans, who naturally need to be brought down.



OPERATION FLASHPOINT: DRAGON RISING

Stuff like *Call of Duty* not warlike enough for ya? Then you'll be sweating to get your paws on this little puppy, which is promising a fully-blown tactical military simulation experience. Plonked into a battle between the Chinese and Russians for control of an oil-laden Japanese isle, it's all unscripted – you're on your own, pal!



STAR WARS THE CLONE WARS: REPUBLIC HEROES

Star Wars games have a history more spotted than Darth Vader's buttocks. Here comes another one, based around the Clone Wars TV series. It's no *The Force Unleashed 2*, we will say that much.

SIMPLY THE BEST...

The best of the best of the best of the best

ADVENTURE



GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

"GTAIV is a game 10 out of 10 was designed for – a game that takes your rising, constantly spiralling expectations and vapourises them with a product so sublime you'll tell your grandkids about it."

DEVELOPER: Rockstar North PUBLISHER: Rockstar PLAYERS: 1-16

10



RED FACTION GUERRILLA

"Turning destruction in to an art form, *Red Faction Guerrilla* is a sandbox experience of the the highest calibre. A credible physics package creates loads of 'must see' moments, making this a game you didn't even know you wanted."

DEVELOPER: Volition PUBLISHER: THQ PLAYERS: 1-16

9



MGS4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS

"An incredibly layered gaming experience that is almost inexhaustible. One of the best games available on the PlayStation 3, and definitely one of the top exclusives. Buy and play this videogame now."

DEVELOPER: Kojima Productions PUBLISHER: Atari PLAYERS: 1-16

10



LITTLE BIGPLANET

"By rejigging the traditional platformer with physics and an accessible level creator, *LittleBigPlanet* becomes something delightfully simple and postmodern – a game that everyone can play, and endlessly recreate."

DEVELOPER: Media Molecule PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1-4

10



INFAMOUS

"The city you explore, the game mechanics, the story, presentation, music and interface all conspire to play silly buggers with your perceptions of what video gaming is all about. Good for at least two playthroughs, the choice to use your superpowers for good or evil is, literally, in your hands."

DEVELOPER: Sucker Punch PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1

9



UNCHARTED: DRAKE'S FORTUNE

"The only bad thing about it is it ends, but hot damn it takes you on a transcendently enjoyable ride. There's no reason why you shouldn't buy this game."

DEVELOPER: Naughty Dog PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1

10



DEAD SPACE

"The best survival horror title this generation – by an absolute country mile. *Dead Space* combines a smart story with incredible visuals, sound design to create what is arguably the scariest video game ever made. A must-play on every possible level."

DEVELOPER: Visceral Games PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1

9



FALLOUT 3

"Taking the solid base of *Oblivion* and placing into a post apocalyptic wasteland always sounded like a great idea – and *Fallout 3* proves that concept brilliantly. This is a game that will astound you with the sheer depth and enormity of it's incredible vision."

DEVELOPER: Bethesda PUBLISHER: Atari PLAYERS: 1

9

SHOOTER



THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ASSAULT ON DARK ATHENA

"Worth your sweat. The combination of two campaigns equals a respectable 20+ hours of gameplay. A must for those wanting something moody and fresh."

DEVELOPER: Starbreeze Studios PUBLISHER: Atari PLAYERS: 1-12

8

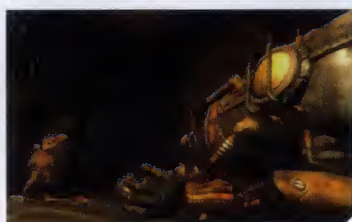


KILLZONE 2

"Visually *Killzone 2* runs through the competition like a bull in the proverbial china shop. Lucky then, that the game's design and story matches the lofty production values. *Killzone 2* is the first-person shooter evolved."

DEVELOPER: Guerrilla PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1-16

10



BIOSHOCK

"As a sub-par port, minus the promised extra content, *BioShock* is a disappointment. BUT you'd be silly to miss out on what is undoubtedly one of the landmark games of this generation so far. In many ways, this is a must play."

DEVELOPER: 2K Marin PUBLISHER: 2K PLAYERS: 1

8



CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN WARFARE

"A fantastic shooter with a dizzying array of combat scenarios and packed with bleeding-edge military hardware. *COD4* is one of the tightest shooters we've ever played."

DEVELOPER: Infinity Ward PUBLISHER: Activision PLAYERS: 1-16

10



WARHAWK

"Tighter than a bull's arse on fight night and smoother than a glass of Guinness, *Warhawk* is a seriously superior piece of software. Multiplayer only, but you'd be barking mad to miss it."

DEVELOPER: Incognito PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1-32

9



THE ORANGE BOX

"*The Orange Box* is ripe, in season, and packed with vitamin value. With five quality titles, including the sublime *Portal*, there truly is something here for everybody. An unmissable package."

DEVELOPER: Valve PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-16

9



CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR

"Superior in many ways to even *Modern Warfare*, this is a surprisingly superlative piece of software. Powerful, well-produced, stuffed with violence – it's fantastic. The action is relentless, the visuals buttery-smooth, the intensity savage – we love it."

DEVELOPER: Treyarch PUBLISHER: Activision PLAYERS: 1-16

10



GHOSTBUSTERS

"Well-honed and accessible controls, some spectacular visual effects, excellent pace, great level design, incredible attention to detail – all of these essential traits combined with the *Ghostbusters* universe and come together for a thoroughly addictive experience."

DEVELOPER: Terminal Reality PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1-4

9



FAR CRY 2

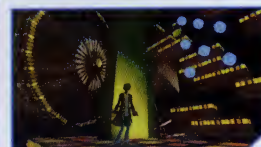
"At times overstretching itself, *Far Cry 2*'s breath taking ambition can often be its undoing, but it's still one of the best shooters out there. Plus, setting stuff on fire is still a ridiculous amount of fun."

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Montreal PUBLISHER: Ubisoft PLAYERS: 1-16

8

TOP 5

PSP ORIGINALS



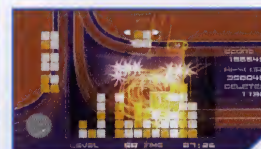
CRUSH

Everybody blabs on about the innovation of *Super Paper Mario*, but *Crush* did the 3D meets 2D thing better, and with mind-warping insomniac action to boot! You'd do well to hit this.



JEANNE D'ARC

An epic as big as the PSP is small, this RPG based on the legendary French heroine's exploits may take a few historical liberties, but we think that's kind of apt. Everything we know about her we got from *Bill & Ted*.



LUMINES

Unless you're *Tetris* creator Alexey Pajitnov (and let's face it, you're not) it isn't easy coming up with a new craze in puzzle games. Q Entertainment managed it though, with this blocky treat.



PATAPON

Remember that '80s song 'Rhythm is Gonna Get You'? Gloria Estefan was likely singing about this, uh, even though it didn't exist back then. Pata pata pata pon! Pata pata pata pon! And so on.



SECRET AGENT CLANK

Everybody's fave robo-buddy ditches the fuzzy dead weight and tuxedos up for his own original and rather fun adventure that's so good it's now being PS2ised.

INDEX

All the games that matter on PS3!

MAGIC MOMENTS



GAME: Vib-Ribbon
CONSOLE: PSX
YEAR: 2000

THE MOMENT:

We can just imagine Masaya Matsuura, the bloke responsible for *PaRappa the Rapper*, pitching the idea.

"It's all about a vibrating rabbit..."

"Uh, dude, my girlfriend's got one of them in her bottom drawer, you want to make a game out of it?!"

So it has nothing to do with adult toys, but we do wonder where the initial concept came from. *Vib-Ribbon*, for the uninitiated, is a vectory-looking rhythm/music game for the PSX starring a rabbit named Vibri, and a line with various hazards that, if not negotiated properly, can cause the bunny star to crack the sads with alarming ferocity. This, of course, is when she's not busy evolving into a princess (good), or devolving into a toad or worm (bad). It's all hooked into some quite wondrous J-Pop tunes, and it's nowhere near as simple as it sounds.

But this is about magic moments, and we were in store for one when we ventured further into the game's abilities. Sure, singing "Walking by the ribbon, luck is by my side" over and over is fun for a while, but it eventually sets the mind to mushing itself. The game has a neat – and we're pretty sure unique in the days of no console-based mega storage – feature in that the code was loaded into memory, allowing the CD to be removed and any music CD to be inserted. Not only that, the game melded itself to the music you selected. So, put in something slow and you got a slow, usually quite simple game. Put in something fast and it was bigger, harder, faster, more. Put in Coldplay and it spat it out.

Okay, the last bit is a lie. It would have been cool though.

Anyway, the challenge was on to find the perfect Vib-Ribbon musical experience. Many discs became Frisbees as we donned our white coats, but we found a winner. "Head like a Hole" by Nine Inch Nails – the perfect combination of slow and fast, spawner of an oft diabolical ribbon and deliverer of satisfaction that yeah, we kick arse at this rather peculiar game.

With or without an umbrella...



RACING



PURE

"Pure shot straight from nowhere to rub *MotorStorm*'s face in its glorious graphics and watertight gameplay. It's not as varied as its main competitor, but damn does it play well."

DEVELOPER: Black Rock **PUBLISHER:** Funtastic **PLAYERS:** 1-16

9



GRAN TURISMO 5: PROLOGUE

"An anemic game package that somehow survives by being what is quite possibly the greatest example of audio-visual excellence on the PlayStation 3 thus far. Well worth checking out."

DEVELOPER: Polyphony Digital
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

8



COLIN MCRAE: DIRT

"The great man rests in peace, but his legacy lives on with this stellar racer that brilliantly bridges the seemingly impenetrable gap between arcade and sim. A seamlessly presented title that juggles depth and accessibility with a precise gusto."

DEVELOPER: Codemasters
PUBLISHER: Atari
PLAYERS: 1-16

9



SEGA RALLY

"To appreciate *Sega Rally* you'll have to continually remind yourself that it's a deceptively life-like caricature of a hardcore rallying experience. Not brain surgery, but it delivers the fun in big muddy spades."

DEVELOPER: Sega Driving Studio
PUBLISHER: Sega
PLAYERS: 1-6

9



RACE DRIVER GRID

"This bastard rock n' roll son of V8 Supercars and *Colin McRae: Dirt* is hot. Your lower jaw will relax. Your eyelids will take five. And you'll start to drool. Shame it ditched its sim roots, but the missing in action V8 DLC has us all a quiver."

DEVELOPER: Codemasters
PUBLISHER: Atari
PLAYERS: 1-12

9



FERRARI CHALLENGE

"Ferrari Challenge will surprise you by being that little bit better than you thought it could ever be. A hardcore racing sim that thrives on the details, this is a suitable title to fend off the petrol heads until *Gran Turismo 5* arrives to rewrite the racing handbook."

DEVELOPER: System 3
PUBLISHER: Red Ant
PLAYERS: 1-16

8



MOTORSTORM

"In our humble opinion *MotorStorm* was the best launch title on the fledgling PS3 – and arguably it's one of the greatest launch titles of all time. Defining next-gen racing as a platform upon which smart AI and terrain deformation could thrive, *MotorStorm* reinvented the arcade racer."

DEVELOPER: Evolution Studios
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

10



MIDNIGHT CLUB: LOS ANGELES

"Within its niche sub-genre, *MC: LA* reigns supreme. Well designed, rolling objectives, and an insane amount of customisation, *MC: LA* manages to rise above the rabble, easily beating off *Need for Speed Undercover* at its own game."

DEVELOPER: Rockstar San Diego
PUBLISHER: Rockstar
PLAYERS: 1-16

7



BURNOUT PARADISE

"You'll lament the thoughtless removal of splitscreen and the lack of a retry button, but you'll marvel at the slick frame rate, the sun drenched city, and Criterion's stellar commitment to free downloadable content. Awesome."

DEVELOPER: Criterion
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-16

9

MUSIC & SPORTS



ROCK BAND

"A triumph. Harmonix has found the formula for a truly great music game – immaculate presentation, great tunes and a job for as many of your friends as possible. You wanted the best, you got the best."

DEVELOPER: Harmonix PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-4

10



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 09

"Golf, for most of the populace, is about as exciting as watching paint dry in an old folk's home, so it's testament to EA that this game actually works well."

DEVELOPER: EA
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-16

8



SKATE 2

"Despite some frame rate issues, *SKATE 2* is undoubtedly one of the greatest sports games ever conceived. The controls are flawless, the city is dense, the balance is sublime. Massively addictive."

DEVELOPER: EA Black Box
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-8

9



FIFA 09

"With its new momentum physics, stellar visuals, and engaging gameplay, 2009 is finally the year that the *FIFA* franchise manages to leap the perennial hurdle that is *Pro Evolution Soccer*. Now Konami have to play catch up."

DEVELOPER: EA Canada
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-20

9



STREET FIGHTER IV

"Capcom has been in the virtual brawling business longer than anyone, and with its vibrant look, online mode and pristine gameplay, *SFIV* is worth paying double for. Acquire on sight."

DEVELOPER: Capcom PUBLISHER: THQ PLAYERS: 1-2

10



NBA 2K9

"Basketball's hardly the national sport of Australia, but that doesn't mean that the game can't be fun. This is a decent representation of Barack Obama's favourite sport. Fans of basketball should check this out."

DEVELOPER: 2K
DISTRIBUTOR: 2K
PLAYERS: 1-10

7



GUITAR HERO METALLICA

"*Guitar Hero Metallica* improves upon *GHWT* in a number ways – a more user-friendly HUD, superior presentation and more attention to detail. Great tracklist too, including 'Tuesday's Gone' by Lynyrd Skynyrd."

DEVELOPER: Neversoft
DISTRIBUTOR: Activision
PLAYERS: 1-4

8



FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3

"Featuring a dual analogue control system (that paved the way for the sublime *SKATE*) *Fight Night Round 3* is perhaps one of the greatest sports games ever conceived. Bone-crunching."

DEVELOPER: EA Chicago
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-2

8



TOP 5

PS3 GAMES TO AVOID NO MATTER HOW CHEAP



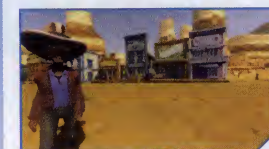
GOLDEN AXE: BEAST RIDER

Here's a plan. Take a beloved, classic arcade hack 'em up franchise and stuff it up royally – yeah, good one. To the bin with this morass of brownness!



THE GOLDEN COMPASS

Some may say movie tie-ins are easy targets when pointing the sceptre of crapulence. We don't care; this is ugly dreck of the lowest order. Read the book instead.



LEISURE SUIT LARRY BOX OFFICE BUST

Such warm fuzzies recalling the old *Larry* games on our Amigas and PCs. Such horror at being affronted by this ghastly progeny that bears none of the original's, erm, anything.



MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM: CROSSFIRE

Anime champ Gundam has spawned some decent videogames. Why then, with all the oomph the PS3 packs, did this stiff, slow and boring abomination get out?



SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

We love Sonic, but this glitchy insult with its rubbishy 3D (note: 2D works for some things) was a slur on the exalted spiky blue one's name. Worst. Sonic game. Ever.

INFAMOUS



7 The President, pre-capping



Who farted?



A 'pane-ful' way to land



7 This guy cleverly caught the bullet with his head

2003

XIII

Cartoon violence got real

Not all comic book heroes are born from the Marvel or DC stable, or come replete with super powers. Indeed, shaking off the image of childhood fantasies, many 'comic books' are more likely to be referred to as graphic novels, and the change within the nomenclature carries with it more solemnity, allowing the chance for themes with more of a basis in normality to be tapped into and explored. *XIII*, the game, is based on the first few volumes of a Belgian graphic novel (published in 1984) of the same name, and the protagonist is also known as XIII. XIII (the guy) treads a path similar to Jason Bourne; he suffers from a wicked bout of amnesia, he's pretty handy with a gun and can run and jump like a secret agent should (easily taking down goons who have been sent to kill him). *XIII*'s plot involves the assassination of the US President, William Sheridan, with XIII as the prime suspect, as well as a shadowy character called the Mongoose. Serving as a capable kinetic experience accompanying the comic series, as a game in its own right it had great moments and it smartly worked well. One of its strong points was splitscreen

multiplayer, a feature too rarely seen since. Tight maps were thematically based on levels within the game and intelligent bots filled the gap of real players.

XIII's hook was its visual style. Matching the graphic novel aesthetic were flat shaded though well-detailed characters and backgrounds, with thick, black outlines. Cel-shading is often regarded as a gimmick, rarely implemented well, though this game's visuals were backed up with other comic/graphic elements. Noises produced by enemies, such as their feet walking down a hallway, produce 'tap tap tap', with the words getting larger or smaller depending on the enemy's location relative to the player. The RPG outlines. The panes would also pop up when a certain item, such as a key, was needed. It was an interesting device, and without it the game would lose a lot of its charm.

XIII was totally linear in progression,

though gave limited environmental damage like breakable windows and the choice of going in quietly with the crossbow or explosively with an RPG. Romping through the gameworld was punctuated by frequent battles with reasonably intelligent AI.

In a swarm of other shooters and action titles released in the same year, such as *Max Payne 2*, *Medal of Honor: Rising Sun*, and big-name titles like *Soulcalibur 2*, *XIII* lost its way on the journey from shelves to consoles. The litmus test of success is a sequel, and it's highly doubtful that there'll be another *XIII*, but regard this as more than an experiment. It's an oddity, definitely, but is certainly worthy of your time. **A Paul Taylor**



DETAILS

CONSOLE: PLAYSTATION 2
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT PARIS
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: FRANCE
CURRENT APPROXIMATE PRICE: \$13 (EBAY) \$10 (EB)

THE TALENT

A rag-tag bunch of well- and not-so-well-known personalities featured in *XIII*. David Duchovny provided *XIII*'s murmuring voice when he wasn't swanning around as Fox Mulder. TV's original Batman, Adam West, voiced General Carrington, one of *XIII*'s allies, and rapper/singer/actress Eve was Jones, another of *XIII*'s cohorts who knew he was innocent. Even radio stars Merrick and Rosso got on board, though not as voice talent – they starred as indiscriminate goons.



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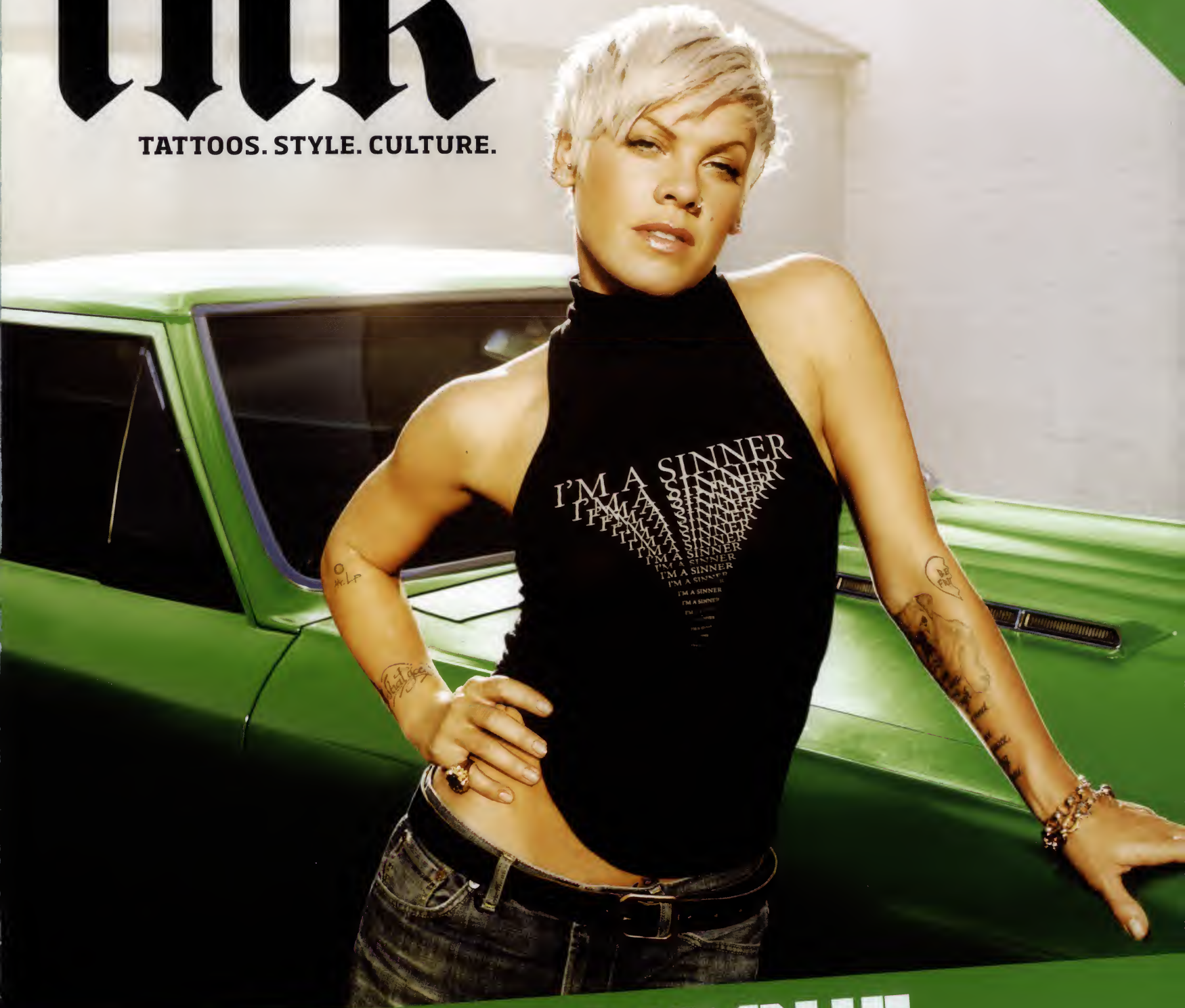
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